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To

Mr. Cubitt. S. Rundle

with the kind regards of

James Cubitt.

Yrs affectionately

Sophia Cooke

MEMOIR

OF

MRS. SOPHIA COOKE,

LATE OF

STALHAM, NORFOLK.

Compiled chiefly from her own Manuscripts.

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DEDICATION.

This Memoir of Sophia Cooke is dedicated to her children and grand children; and by it she "being dead, yet speaketh." She was the friend of all mankind; but her heart was chiefly with her children, and its deepest longings were for their salvation. To benefit their souls she conversed, and wrote, and prayed.

In this book she teaches by example; for it is, to a great extent, an autobiography: her life is described by her own pen. Its lessons are those which she would have most urged; namely, that consecration to God should be early, and that it should be complete.

To the age of sixteen she lived without God; and this afterwards caused her deep regret. While yet a girl she began to inquire after God; and before she was nineteen she "professed a good profession before many witnesses," and was openly baptized as a disciple of Jesus Christ. She gave him her whole heart. From the date of her baptism, none could doubt whose servant she was. The friendships she formed

were Christian friendships. The pleasures she pursued were religious pleasures. In every condition of life, her chief endeavour was to serve God.

The eminence of her piety is traceable, under God, to these facts. If she had not begun her Christian course so early, or if she had not continued it so steadily, she could not have been what she was. The maturity of her character was the result of growth, and bespoke the vigour of its preceding stages.

And if solicitude for those on earth is consistent with the happiness of heaven, and if from her mansion in the Father's house she can behold what passes below, she looks that her offspring should follow her; beginning as soon to serve Christ, persevering as steadfastly in his ways, reaching an equally fruitful maturity, and reaping the same glorious reward.

MEMOIR.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

"THE *memory* of the just is blessed." The history of those who have been eminent for their holiness, often awakens in our minds, after they have departed, a deeper reverence than was felt before. While they are living we are more likely to be affected by the action of the passing moment: and petty peculiarities of manner and habit may produce an undue effect upon the mind. But we estimate the character of a *deceased* friend from the contemplation of his whole history; and our impressions are powerful in proportion to the consistency of the course he has pursued.

It is right, therefore, that the character of Mrs. Cooke should have some lasting memorial,—that its many excellencies should be described and their harmony exhibited,—in order that her descendants may not forget how worthy she was of their esteem, and with how much advantage they may follow her example. It is for them chiefly this volume has been compiled; and therefore many

incidents, hardly suitable for a published book, have been recorded without scruple, for the purpose of displaying the excellencies of the departed.

To her grand-children especially, in whose everlasting welfare she took a lively interest, this volume may be of real advantage, if it present the image of a Christian life which many of them were too young to observe in its actual course, but which may be studied with profit while their own characters are forming. The young are prone to imitate; and likely as they are to be surrounded with inferior or vicious examples, it is well that the virtues of their pious ancestor should be held up for their imitation.

CHAPTER II.

PARENTAGE.

THE incidents of Mrs. Cooke's life were not numerous; the principal of them, down to 1812, have been recorded by herself in a separate narrative: additional information is occasionally inserted from other sources; especially from her diary, which was kept in a series of pocket-books, extending from 1797 to the end of her life.

"I was born," she says, "November 10th, 1778. My father's name was William Cubitt. He was born and brought up in the parish of Neatishead, on a little farm which is now plantation and park to Beeston Hall. The Preston family paid great respect to him, as being a very steady and industrious young man; and his father was induced to give up the business to him. He was also generally respected as a moral man and a man of business. In 1778 he removed to a larger farm, on Neatishead common, the same which was afterwards occupied by Mr. John Clowes. My father was paralyzed about two years before his death, which occurred February 14th, 1794, when he was in his 70th year. He was married twice.

By his first wife, (Hannah Taylor, of Smallburgh,) he had several children, three of whom lived to upwards of sixty years of age. These were Margaret, Hannah, and William; the last was an infant when his mother died. After living some years a widower, my father married again, about 1762. His second wife was my mother; her maiden name was Mary Bayes. This union proved a happy one, and continued thirty-two years. My mother had eleven children of her own, and brought up seven of them. It pleased the Lord to call her eldest son away by death at six years old; she also buried a Charlotte and two Juliets in infancy. But it was not till after she had lost her beloved husband, that she was called to mourn over the graves of two of her grown-up children. These losses deepened the wound made by the death of her dear partner; but still she was supported, and her losses seemed to lead her more to the bible and prayer.

"Mrs. Cubitt and her husband were strictly of the Church of England, and brought their family up to it; but a Dissenter, Mr. Sparkhall, married Hannah, daughter of the first Mrs. Cubitt; and Mr. Culley, who married my mother's own daughter Mary, was also a Dissenter. These connections helped to soften their prejudice against that body of professors; and though at one period my mother would hardly have gone into a place of theirs for worship, yet after her daughter's marriage she was several times a hearer at Lady Huntingdon's chapel, Norwich; and in 1795, when she went to see Mrs. Sparkhall, she attended an evening lecture at Mrs. Popay's, when Mr. Beard, the Baptist minister at Worstead, preached. This discourse, she thought, much enlightened her mind into divine

truth; the Spirit of God convincing her of having broken his holy law, and causing her to see that salvation is all of grace, through Jesus Christ, who came into this world to seek and to save poor miserable sinners. From this time she more than ever took pleasure in serious company; and often had prayer put up, by ministers and other friends, in her habitation; she would also bow at the family altar, when prayer was offered up by her son William, or by one of her daughters.

"In 1796 the Lord saw fit to lay a heavy affliction upon her; but she was raised up again to enjoy a better state of health.

"In the year 1802 she left Neatishead, and went to keep her son James's house at Beeston, where she continued till 1810, when he married; she then went to live in a cottage at Stalham, near one of her daughters; where she has contented herself ever since, having enough left her by her dear husband to support her in her quiet way of living. She is now waiting till the Lord shall call her to himself, and is desirous of attending the means of grace as frequently as possible. She attends the church in the day-time, and the meeting in the evening, and rejoices in having serious friends around her."

This account is dated February 7th, 1817. Mrs. Cubitt's mind became much weakened afterwards. She continued to reside in the cottage behind the mill-house until her death, which took place May 31st, 1823. She was buried in Neatishead churchyard, by the side of her husband and his former wife.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY HISTORY.

"My first recollection was the being provided with every comfort by a kind father and mother, who trained me up to fear a lie, and speak the truth; led me on the sabbath to the parish church, where they attended very regularly; and caused me to read chapters out of the Scriptures, verse by verse, with my brothers and sisters on a Sunday evening. I recollect also that a kind elder sister, Mary, taught me Dr. Watts's divine songs, when I retired to rest; and to this day I remember being in love with the character of him who is thus described:—

'His soul was gentle as a lamb;
And, as his stature grew,
He grew in favour both with man,
And God his Father too,'

although as yet I knew nothing of him as a Saviour, or of my need of him.

"I often look back on my early life with pleasure, tracing the ways by which I was brought to see my lost state, and to leave the Church of England and become a Dissenter. Before I was born, it pleased God to send

into our family, as team-man, Bower Sparkhall, who had been brought up a Dissenter; and although my father, who knew nothing of sects, considered none right but the Church of England, yet, as his team-man was an excellent servant,—as he was not at that time, I believe, an enlightened man,—and as he attended the parish church, there being no dissenting place near,—my father made no objection to him on account of his sentiments. At the Michaelmas before I was born Mr. Sparkhall married my sister Hannah, the second daughter of my father's first family; and, so much had he gained the esteem of his father-in-law, that he put him into business in a farm at Ashmanhaugh, placed great confidence in him, and consulted him much in his own business. From the time of Mr. Sparkhall's marriage he attended at Ingham meeting; and though my sister did not, while her family were very young, yet she never hindered him. On August 14th, 1791, he made a public profession of religion by baptism; after a time my sister was converted, and on June 4th, 1797, she was baptized and joined the same church. During my father's life my brother William, who was one of the first family, attended at Ingham meeting with Mr. Sparkhall, and the Lord met him there, and brought him out of darkness into his marvellous light. This created more dislike to dissent in my father's mind; but about three years before his death my sister Mary married Mr. Culley, who had been brought up a Dissenter, and was a gentleman of good prospects. After this my sisters and I used to stop several weeks at a time with Mrs. Culley; and, while there, attended with her at Lady Huntingdon's chapel, at Norwich. All these things tended to bring our family

amongst Dissenters: but my father still continued firm in his attachment to the church walls; although the vicar was a blind leader of the blind, and so old that he could scarcely be heard by his congregation. Before my father's death my sister Charlotte had, I think, become serious. She had been sent to Norwich to learn dress-making; and it was so ordered by the Lord, that both the person employed to teach her and the person with whom she lodged were Dissenters; and thus she became a constant attendant at Lady Huntingdon's chapel. These circumstances, with a violent illness which she had, led, under the blessing of God, to a change for the better in her state of mind; and after she came home, she obtained an excellent book of prayers, I think Venn's, and had leave to read them in the family every night; this continued up to the last night of my dear father's life. I think it was in the year in which he died that my brother William began to pray in the family. This kind brother was very useful to my soul. He took the Evangelical Magazine, which I had the opportunity of reading; and the obituaries, especially, I found very profitable to me. Before this time I had often felt great pleasure in attending the ministry of Mr. Philips, at Lady Huntingdon's chapel; the singing and music much delighted me; still I knew not the Lord. I had some solemn thoughts at the funeral of my dear father; particularly in the evening, when my sister Charlotte had a hymn sung before we parted with our friends. It was the hymn beginning

'Stoop down my thoughts, that use to rise,
Converse awhile with death:'

but the effect thus produced was not lasting. In the summer of 1794 there was a confirmation held at North Walsham, which our clergyman requested me and my sisters to attend. This disturbed my mind a good deal, as I had begun to be much distressed with blasphemous thoughts, and I was fearful that, by being confirmed, I should do an act of wickedness, and pull down vengeance on my soul. But I went; and, when the bishop laid his hand on me, it seemed to make me shudder, lest I should not be right. I continued to be alarmed about my state; and, like the poet, I could say respecting my sins,

> 'The more I strove against their power
> I sinned and stumbled but the more.'

"At length I opened my mind to my sister Charlotte; and I shall not forget how I felt on her observing that she was glad to hear me say what I did; that she hoped the Lord was working on my soul; and repeated to me the Saviour's invitation, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' This seemed to afford me my first gleam of hope. But I still continued very much distressed about my sins. By some means I had the use of Bunyan's 'Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ,' which I read very often, and sometimes got a little relief thereby; but my wicked thoughts troubled me again, and I seemed to lose my hope. I think it was about this time that Mr. Beard, the worthy minister of the Baptist church at Worstead, came into the village of Barton to preach on a week evening; and I and my sisters obtained leave of my dear mother to attend. One of his sermons was from these words, 'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the

ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert.' This sermon, and several others, were much blessed to the enlightening of my mind; and I trust that, through grace, I was brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of my soul. Soon after this my dear sisters Charlotte and Maria, and myself obtained leave to have a horse and cart to go to Worstead meeting. At first, two of us went one Sunday, and two another, and one had always to attend at church with our dear mother; but in time we fully left off, and all three went together to Worstead, though I often felt vexed to leave my dear mother to go to church alone."

It is much to be regretted that no diary remains of this part of Mrs. Cooke's mental history. Only one of her pocket books has been found earlier than the year of her baptism; it belongs to 1795, that is the year after her confirmation. Its manuscript contents relate chiefly to household affairs, and to occurrences in the family and neighbourhood. Thus it records with due formality (she was then little more than sixteen) the death of "Maria's black rabbit;" and afterwards a like affecting event in reference to "Maria's white young rabbit." There is one entry however under the date "Sunday, January 25th," worth copying for the extraordinary occurrence it records; "William went to meeting; the sea was frozen a hundred yards on; a remarkable thing." Probably such an event has not happened since.

But she begins the year 1797 in a decidedly spiritual strain. "While I write these lines, thanks to the God of providence, I am in health; but in one hour I may have

left the things of time for ever. Stop and think, O my soul, ere it is too late: consider, eighteen years of thy life have been spent; but how? Alas, sixteen years of them without the knowledge of thy God and Saviour; grant, Lord, that there be no more. But dost thou know him now? Hast thou not had two years' privilege of hearing the gospel of Jesus; and has the good Spirit of God opened thine eyes to see thy need of Jesus to reconcile thee as a sinner to a holy God, and to sprinkle thy best performances with his precious blood? Hast thou seen thy lost state and vileness? Dost thou hate sin? Dost thou long to be holy, to put off the old man and to put on the new? Is this my state, O thou searcher of hearts? Then to thee be all the glory! And O grant me, Lord, the grace of the Lord Jesus, that I may, in this ensuing year, be growing up in all thy holy ways. And O blessed Spirit, be thou my teacher! instruct a poor blind creature of a day, and give me, O Lord, to obey thee: may I be this year devoted to thee, thou blessed Jesus; what thou commandest make me willing to do. Make me to know more of myself and of thee. O that I may live a life of self-denial: and if thou shouldst call me from this time-state in this year, may I leave a testimony that I am saved through grace, and am an heir of God through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

"*Monday, Jan. 2nd,* 1797. If I love, why am I thus, so distrustful? Hide not thy face, O my Jesus, but shine on me, I pray.

"*3rd.* O Lord, give me, unworthy me, grace to see that, though I change, yet thou art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Still, O my soul, on his plighted love at

all events rely; and, though he hide his face, remember, that he is not unmindful of thee. Come, Holy Spirit, and quicken my drowsy powers!

"5*th*. Lord make me thankful that thou didst give us the opportunity of speaking to our pastor; and I trust the conversation, through thy blessing, will be profitable. Grant that it may be brought to our minds by thy Holy Spirit, for Jesus' sake!

"6*th*. Had a trial to go through. * * * * I feared I should be forced to play at cards; but at tea time a promise came into my mind, 'I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' I pray God I may always remember it; for the Lord was faithful to his promise. I did not play at cards. But I was forced to stay at supper, and we had no spiritual conversation. O dear Jesus, enable me to come out of the world, and may thy dear name be all my joy!

"8*th*. *(Sunday.)* Surely I ought to give thanks unto the Lord, that such a worthless creature as I am should have the privilege of going to his house, and that with my two sisters. It has been a day of fat things to my soul; glory be to the Lord for that! Though the Lord has hid his face, yet again did he shine upon me, and give me to feel love to his house, his people, and his ways. It was ordinance day, and I had much comfort in looking on; but could not help telling Mr. Beard, when I called for a book on baptism, that I wished to have been below instead of in the gallery.

"9*th*. The Lord is kind; O that I may ever remember that he changes not; and that, as I have this day found him precious, I may trust him in the darkest hour. Brother and sister came. How prone I am to

murmur! I wished they had not come so soon after the Sabbath, because they did not talk spiritually, and I am apt sooner to remember worldly talk than the glorious truths of the blessed God. Blessed be the Lord, this is not our rest. O Jesus, let me rest on thee!

"13*th*. What ingratitude dwells in me! Instead of blessing and praising the Lord for a throne of grace, I am apt to think it a task to pray; and, when attempting it, my thoughts wander after worldly things. I find I shall backslide, unless thou, O Jesus, hold me fast. Grant me, dear Lord, thy Spirit in abundance; keep Satan from me, and soon take me to thyself.

"14*th*. Surely I have reason to thank the Lord that he has helped me to address him before my mother, who was taken ill in the night. I find I am a rebellious sinner, full of iniquity, self-righteousness, and stubbornness. 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.' When the Lord enables me to pray I am prone to take the glory to myself.

"15*th*. Brother and sister called and drank tea at ours; our dear mother was very ill. Here I would lament that professors of religion do not speak more for Jesus. O that I could speak for him. Lord, make me, and all thy people speak for thee!"

In these extracts we have the utterances of a mind deeply embued with religious affections, burning with zeal to serve and glorify God, and very jealous of itself. Such expressions often indicate the school in which a professor has been trained to think and speak, more than the actual emotions of his own heart. In such cases they repel and disgust by their want of reality; and beget suspicion rather than confidence. Sophia

Cubitt's pen was guided by her heart; she really desired the excellencies she described, for she laboured after them, and attained them in a remarkable degree. Her friends will be struck with the closing expressions in the last extract, recollecting her constant readiness in after life to "speak for Jesus."

The narrative will be now resumed.

"In process of time I heard Mr. Beard preach a sermon on baptism; and concerning the Scripture representation of it as a burial, he observed that no tender parent would consider her infant buried, if only a few clods of earth were thrown on the coffin. On Wednesday, 8th March, 1797, my two dear sisters and I were baptized in a brook just by the meeting. As it was a fast day, a large congregation were present; and as the church meetings were open to the congregation, we had to speak our experience before a great many people. I heard that a person was converted by hearing one of the experiences that day: praise God!

"A large concourse attended our baptism, and a clergyman who lived near happening to pass at the time, he was heard to say, 'poor deluded young women!' But we rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, who said, 'Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' On the Lord's day following we were received into the church. Mr. Beard's text that afternoon was, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.' The hymn at the Lord's Supper was that which contains these words:—

> 'Thee my new master will I call,
> And consecrate to thee my all!'

I felt happy that I was following the Lord."

The following extracts from her diary relate to this important period. On Sunday, March 5th, (three days before her baptism,) after noticing a call which had disturbed her meditations, she expresses a sentiment we have met with in an earlier extract, "Blessed be God, this is not our rest." She then proceeds:—

"What a weak creature am I. How I dread going to speak for the Lord!"

If we remember that she was expected to give a detailed account of the exercises of mind through which she had been brought to serve the Lord, and probably also of her sentiments on the chief doctrines of the gospel,—that it was to be given in the presence of four or five hundred people,—and all this by a young woman between eighteen and nineteen years of age, who had most likely never before spoken aloud in an assembly larger than a family circle,—we shall not consider her "dread of going to speak for the Lord," any extraordinary proof of weakness!

The diary thus proceeds:—

"*March 6th.* What a week is this! How many difficulties have I to go through! The church meeting is to be held, and I am expected to go and speak before the congregation what the Lord has done for my soul. When I look to myself I sink with despairing thoughts. O that I could look more to Jesus; and that I may have to declare that 'it was better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes!' This day I find that I am a poor, helpless, indigent creature. But the Lord is good, and giveth gifts even to the rebellious, or he never would have given me any desire to follow him.

"*8th.* What hath God wrought? Has he not this day enabled Charlotte, Maria, and me, to speak in his

church what he has done for our souls? Charlotte spoke nicely; and Maria better than I; but the Lord knows what is right. I lament that I could speak no more. Yet, blessed be God, I was not confused; only I had not the light of the Lord's countenance as I wish. There were a great many people there; indeed, Mr. Beard said he never saw so many people at an ordinance before. Lord what an unworthy creature am I; yet the blood of Jesus, I trust, was shed for me. O that I may be a useful member of his body."

How fully this earnest prayer was answered, all who knew her activity, diligence, and success, will bear witness.

The following entry was made a few days later:—

"Miss M—. too often speaks against us; but blessed be God that he has made us willing to suffer persecution with his people, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. O that she may be brought to come with us!"

Thus heartily did she obey her Saviour's command, "Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you."

The narrative proceeds thus:—

"Through the mercy of God we were helped onward in the path of duty, though not without persecutions. When our young acquaintances found that we had left the church, and were determined to attend among the Dissenters, they first pitied and entreated us, and then cast us off."

"Through mercy we had other kind friends raised up; the Brooks family, the Snellings, and, through dear sister Mary, the Culley family, among whom we frequently visited with her.

"In October, 1796, we were called to follow to the grave our beloved sister, who died of a rapid decline, being ill only a few days. The character of this, the eldest of my mother's daughters, was truly amiable, and she was much esteemed by all who knew her. She was educated at Norwich. After finishing school she lived at home with her parents till she married. She remained a stranger to her real state as a sinner, and her need of Christ, till after her marriage; and I think it was at an Association at Ipswich that she hoped the change essential to salvation took place. Mr. Denham, then the Baptist minister at Dereham, preached on the building of Solomon's temple; and compared the fact that a tool was not heard in the building, to the work of the Spirit of God upon a sinner's heart. From this time Christ and his salvation were the delight of her soul. Now, when she came to visit us, she wished Mr. Sparkhall to pray and sing hymns; and often, very often, did we sing her favourite hymn,

'There is a fountain filled with blood.'

Religion now was all her delight, and continued so till it pleased her heavenly Father to take her to himself. In her illness she was very happy; she thought she should die; and regarded her affliction as the voice of God, saying to her, 'Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.' She repeated several sweet portions of hymns; amongst others,

'Mourning souls, dry up your tears.'

and,

'Trust in the mighty Saviour's name,
And you shall never die.'

She spoke earnestly to her friends about their souls. To some, who were pharisaical, she pointed out their error; and to one, who was very fond of dress, she spoke of its vanity and folly. She declared that she had a good hope through grace; and, though very happily married, with a most affectionate husband, and a good situation in life, she was resigned to give up all, that she might go to the Saviour. Mr. Philips, of Lady Huntingdon's chapel, Norwich, whose ministry she attended, preached a funeral sermon for her, from Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.'

"My dear sister's remains were, by her desire, buried by those of her family, in Neatishead churchyard; and the corpse was brought into our house till after dinner. It was a mournful day; O that it may prove to have been sanctified to all the mourners!"

The interval between the death of Mrs. Culley and that of the first Mrs. Cooke, is passed over in the narrative; but the omission may be supplied from the diary.

At the beginning of 1798, Miss Cubitt wrote the following reflections:—

"'How shall I come before the Lord, or bow myself before the high God?' How shall I, that am all sin and pollution, speak unto him who is holy, and cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence? Great God, I confess that I am vile, that I have added sin to sin; but I bless thy name that thou hast so loved a sinful world as to give thy beloved Son, to suffer, bleed, and die, that he might reconcile thy people unto thee. It is in his name, and through his merits I would look unto thee at

this time, for a double anointing of thy Holy Spirit, that I may spend my few remaining days more to thy glory than I have ever yet done. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus sake, Amen.

"Another year is past, another's come,
And I am nearer my eternal home.
O may the grace of God, my heavenly friend,
Be granted me, until my life shall end;
And when my sorrows and my war be o'er,
O may I live where I shall die no more,
But join the never-ending song above,
Of praise to Jesus for his wondrous love.
But whilst I'm here, my God, afford me grace,
To glorify thee in my Christian race.
O make me keep in the blest narrow way,
And from thy paths O let me never stray;
But keep me from the world's alluring snare,
Whilst I am passing through another year;
That at the end, if I the end should see,
I may return my warmest thanks to thee."

As some other poetical attempts are acknowledged by Miss Cubitt to be her own composition, it is probable that these lines have the same origin. The earnest piety, the dread of evil influences from the world, and the humble dependence on supporting grace expressed in them, were just the sentiments most prevailing in her mind.

In the course of this year the increasing displays of a tendency in the family towards dissenting worship began to attract notice and opposition. Oct. 6th she says:—

"Brother Benjamin called and told us that Mr. Hulton (the landlord) was very angry at William's having preaching at his schoolroom, and at our leaving church to go to meeting; and had said that none of that

sort should be benefited by him; and that if James would go, he should not have Benjamin's farm. This last greatly distressed me, as I was fearful it would tempt James to forsake the ways of God; but, blessed be the Lord, when he heard of it he said, 'he cared not, that if he had not that he hoped he should be provided for; and that he was as well off as many;' so that we have to be thankful for his resignation."

About this time her mind was a good deal disturbed by doubts concerning the extent of the atonement, and kindred theological questions. She was not fond of argument; but friendly discussions on these subjects had been carried on in her hearing; and they were so closely connected with the foundation of all her hopes, that she listened with attention and interest. The result was much perplexity and loss of comfort. But the method she adopted in the midst of her uncertainty, exhibits the practical character of her religion, and has the sanction of Christ's words, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." December 8th, she writes thus:—

"I wish to lay aside puzzling questions about general and particular redemption, and to bring the word home to myself. Am I a child of light? do my life and conversation prove it? What love have I to God and godliness? have I so much that I can renounce the world, its honours and pursuits, when they stand in competition with his glory? Am I willing to follow Jesus through evil as well as through good report? Are his people esteemed by me as the excellent of the earth?

'Searcher of hearts, O search me still,
And to myself, myself reveal.'"

The following extracts from a letter to a Christian friend, dated Oct. 3rd, 1799, will give a further insight into the state of her mind.

DEAR FRIEND,

I received your letter with pleasure; but am sorry you should have requested an answer, as I feel myself very incapable of writing in a profitable way; but I hope, as a sister in the gospel, you will cover the mantle of love over the defects you will see in the letter of one of the unworthiest of the followers of the Lamb. I am happy to hear you have spent your time so agreeably with your friends; you have been highly favoured with the means of grace. Ah! my friend, when I consider the goodness of the Lord in bringing me to see the emptiness of earthly things, I am astonished that I no more prize the means he has appointed to draw the soul nearer to himself.

You ask me how I go on in the divine life. By what I have already said you find that I make but slow progress therein; but it is a mercy I am kept in the way; and, blessed be God, those who are righteous by imputation shall hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger: whatever their fears may be to the contrary, God is true; and not one of his promises shall fail. O what a God is the Christian's! may it be my earnest desire to glorify him more than ever. My dear Miss Snelling, pray for your unworthy friend, that, as she trusts grace has been given to her, it may always be in lively exercise. If it were more so how could I tread the trifles of time beneath my feet, and rise superior to all its vexations. But it is proper that we should pass

through much tribulation to the kingdom; for had we everything here to render us comfortable, we should forget that we are strangers and sojourners. Well, it is happy for us, that, as we trust we are interested in the blood of Jesus, 'a few more rolling suns' shall land us safely in heaven, and then we shall more fully see the wisdom of God in appointing thorns and briars in the wilderness. Could I see death disarmed of his sting, I should long for the period when my body shall return to the dust and my spirit to the God that gave it. You may, perhaps, ask why my thoughts turn so on death; I have lately been unwell, and this has made me feel how imperfect are all earthly enjoyments, and desire to depart and be with Christ. But these thoughts are too momentary; for I have many things to tie me to earth: but my prayer is that whenever it shall please God to call me hence, I may cheerfully bid adieu to friends and relatives, knowing it will be so much to my advantage to depart. * * *

I conclude by subscribing myself,

Your sincere friend,

S. CUBITT.

The year 1800 was an eventful year in the family. On June 10th her sister Charlotte was married to Mr. Hastings; and on Thursday, October 9th, Maria, her "favourite sister," was married to Mr. S. Cooke, miller, of Stalham. Anticipating this event, she writes, on the first day of the month:—

"I am now tried with the prospect of losing my dear Maria's company. O how it pains my heart to think that the time is so near at hand when I must part with

my chief solace. But it is the will of God, and it is mine to submit: O for grace so to do."

On the 9th she writes:—

"The day of trial to me has at length arrived. Maria, my favourite sister, is this day torn from me, to be the wife of Mr. Cooke. O, my heart, be still! What I have experienced this week is best known to myself. Others may think me foolish and dishonouring to God: but he knows my heart. I wish to weep submissively:

'He gives; and, blessed be his name,
He takes but what he gave:'

but oh, the thought that I have lost her, in some measure, for ever, cuts my heart, and tears will gush afresh. On Wednesday, Mr. Cooke told me, jokingly, '*he had quite done with the parlour:*' this set me off weeping heartily, which continued some time after I was in bed."

On October 3rd of the next year, a few days after her confinement, this beloved sister died; and she was buried on the first anniversary of her wedding day! The following observations were made in her sister Sophia's pocket-book, on this affecting occasion:—

"When I last wrote I had no idea but of going on as usual. But the ways of God are unseen, and too much unthought of by the children of men. May the sharp school of afflictive providence to which he has seen fit to put me, be made the most useful, as it is one of the most trying. My soul desires yet to say 'Father, not my will, but thine, be done:' but my nature swerves too often. O Lord, forgive thy frail creature!

"I think it was on the Wednesday of the following week" (probably the week following her sister's confine-

ment,) "Mr. Cooke sent a note to inform my mother that our dear Maria wished her to go, as she was sadly with a cold. I could not help shedding very many tears at the news. I thought of poor Henry Culley's letter to mother when dear sister Mary was taken with her dying illness. Indeed, I have often wept, fearing my Maria would not live over the trying time she had to pass through; and the fear of her taking cold especially hung on my mind. James went on the Thursday morning, and found my dear sister better; and the doctor seemed to have no fear of her recovery; (I think I had placed my expectation too much on man here;) I was glad, and when he told me she expected me on the morrow, I, being busy, thought it almost needless to go. But I went; and glad enough I am that I did; though it was painful to find my bosom friend and dearest sister exceedingly ill, so much so that we quite despaired of her life. I could not leave her that night, but sat up with her. Next day, through the goodness of God, she was much better. When I left her at night, I was a great deal happier in my mind, thinking she was likely soon to be well again. But the Lord, whose ways are in the dark, thought fit to blast my hopes. Next day James drove me to Stalham: I found my beloved sister much worse, so that mother could not leave her. Next morning mother went home and I stopped. Mr. Beard called in the morning and went to prayer. I was almost overwhelmed with distress; and to describe the agonies of my mind for more than a fortnight afterwards, is impossible. My dearest Maria lost her senses, and I was as a guard to her. O my distress! I thought I could not live under it. But God was faithful to his word; he

never left me: as my day, so was my strength. Very little only had I of my Maria's conversation, as she was generally insensible; so that I have reason to bless God for his wisdom and goodness in weaning me little by little; if my dear sister had been taken from me that Friday when I first saw her ill, I know not what I should have done. Indeed I am too much cast down at times now. On Wednesday she was more composed, though not sensible. On Thursday she was very much convulsed; but as she had often been worse, I was with her alone; because she always liked that I should be with her rather than the nurse. I think it was about two o'clock at noon that I had Mr. Cooke called; and he thought her going from earth to heaven. But she revived again, and the doctor was sent for; though he was prevented from coming till night. Mother had arranged to come that afternoon; and glad was I that she did come and stop all night, wishing to see the last of our loved one, for we believed that death had struck her at the time. Mr. Cooke and we sat with her all night: she continued very ill and much convulsed; and called continually for her 'dear Sophia.' About ten o'clock on Friday night I saw my dearest earthly friend depart from time to eternity. Adieu, then, my Maria; adieu, till Jesus our Lord shall bid me ascend where he in infinite mercy has taken you! But my fond heart, my selfish nature, would yet hug thee to my breast—would entreat a thing impossible, a return, not for thy sake, but for mine. Yet I hope I would not wish contrary to the will of God. To his glory I would say it, I found unexpected support. I stood and viewed with composure my darling sister breathing out her last

breath; and felt such joy when I thought she was entering upon glory, that I seemed to have all the powers of my soul calling on me to bless the Lord for taking his dear servant home to himself. But yet again I found I was left; and I could not help saying, with David, 'Would God I had died for thee!' Well, I would wish to remember her funeral text, 'Be still, and know that I am God.'

"O unsatisfied creature that I am. I was almost wretched last Michaelmas, to part with her for a few weeks at a time; but now I have lost her dear society for ever in this vale of tears. O my distressed heart! Hush, fond nature. O may I solace myself in God! may I find that this is working for my eternal advantage. Here I have no continuing city.

"On Saturday evening Mrs. Silcock and sister Charlotte came to speak to me: on Sunday we stopped at home, and read Job and hymns. I every day spent some time in contemplating the dear cold remains of my darling sister; and have great reason to bless God that I was enabled to weep with submission. On Wednesday Mr. Cooke and I spent some time weeping over the corpse which we must so soon behold no more on earth. Thursday was the day of the burial: that day twelve months she was married! Oh melancholy contrast! May it teach me, teach all, to be wise for eternity; knowing that the greatest comforts of this life are so soon blighted."

The death of this beloved sister cost Miss Cubitt great agitation and perplexity. The ardent and remarkable affection she had felt for her sister was transferred in all its power to the bereaved infant. At the request of its

surviving parent she undertook the care of it soon after the death of its mother; and for that purpose removed to Stalham. Her love for it increased day by day; and she watched over it with an unremitting attention equal to any its own mother could have shown or desired for it. Every expression of tenderness is employed by turns in her diary, and almost everything which concerned it is recorded with great minuteness. Several times during this period the child was ill, once with scarlet fever, and its second mother (for the title of aunt is too cold to describe her affection) seemed as if her 'life was bound up in the lad's life.' The following is an extract from the diary of this period:—

"Samuel is very ill again. Oh what pain I feel on account of that dear motherless boy! If he is ill, I tremble at the thought of losing him; if he is well, I shudder at the idea of separation, to which duty may ere long call me; so that at times I am ready to wish that I may follow him to the grave; and then, if there is any appearance of his dying, I am hugging him to my bosom and crying 'spare him, good Lord.' O that I may never find him a snare to my soul! Alas, I often think he is held as an idol in my affections. O keep me, dear Jesus, keep me from idols!"

At length the agitation of her mind brought on a distressing nervous disorder. This is described in the narrative, which will now be resumed.

"After the death of my beloved sister Maria, I removed from Neatishead to Stalham to take the charge of the motherless infant: and there I continued till March, 1804. I was then attacked with a nervous disorder and

went to Beeston, where I lived with my brother James and my mother for nearly a year. I was in a very dark and dejected frame of mind, fearing that I had sinned the unpardonable sin, and suffering from many other desponding apprehensions, through my shattered nerves. During this time my dear pastor, Mr. Beard, often visited me, while I continued to write bitter things against myself. For some weeks I felt afraid to go to the table of the Lord, or to enter the house of prayer, lest I should seal my destruction by it.

"I think it was early in the spring of 1805, that I heard Mr. Chamberlin, of Norwich, at Smallburgh chapel, from Micah iv, 6 and 7: 'In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halteth a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.' This discourse was the first which gave me any relief after the nervous disorder seized me. From that time I began to attend at my brother William's schoolroom, where he had preaching. Some hymns sung there, and a sermon of Mr. Beard's from Psalm cxix, 49, were a relief to me. Mr. Trivett, of Langham, also preached a cheering sermon, when the hymn was sung beginning

'Why does your face, ye humble souls,
Such mournful colours wear?'

After a time I began to go to Worstead again; and, through much mercy, the dark cloud was removed, and I was restored to my right mind. 'Bless the Lord, O

my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.' I trust this season of soul-darkness, and nervous affliction, will ever be numbered among the 'all things' which worked together for my good."

CHAPTER IV.

MARRIAGE.

The narrative thus proceeds:—

"On July 30th, 1805, I was married to Mr. S. Cooke, of Stalham mill. Mr. Cooke's brothers, Robert and Henry, dined with us at Beeston; other parts of the family joined us at tea, and the dear little Samuel, whom I always loved so much, was with us. We sang the wedding hymn, and Mr. Sparkhall prayed.

"This event I desire to record with gratitude, as my former fears that Mr. Cooke was not a Christian were removed. I trust his trials on my account were sanctified to his soul, as he has always been an encourager of me in every good word and work in the service of the Lord."

At the time of Mrs. Cooke's marriage many customs were prevalent, even among professors of religion, not in accordance with her strict ideas of morality, and now generally discountenanced by serious people. Such was the working of flour mills on the Lord's day. This was customary at Stalham mill, especially when trade was good, or a windy Sunday happened in a time of prevalent calm. At this mill also,

as at most others, flour was sold by retail on the Sabbath forenoon. These things were very painful to the mind of Mrs. Cooke. The breach of the Sabbath by any one would have disturbed her, but that her own husband should be the transgressor doubled her grief. Moreover, she felt herself in some degree a partaker of the guilt, inasmuch as the gains of Sunday trading contributed to defray the expenses of her house. She therefore at once began to use her influence to get the objectionable practices discontinued; and in the meantime rejoiced unfeignedly when a calm Sunday forbade the revolution of the sails. But her desires were not gratified at once; and she frequently mentions the activity at the mill as lessening her Sabbath enjoyments. At length, towards the close of 1809, Mr. Cooke gave her a promise that the sale of flour on Sundays should be discontinued after Christmas. She accepted this as an answer to prayer, and on Sunday, December 31st, wrote as follows:—

"I wish to praise the Lord for all the mercies of the past year, but especially for the mercy of this day, such a day as I have long desired, a Sabbath on which we do not sell anything. This is what I have long prayed for, and the Lord has graciously answered me thus far. O that I may still persevere, and find an answer in that there may be no grinding done on the Lord's day. To-day the mill was shut up at eleven o'clock, though there was a good wind. This is a mercy, and I trust that in time it will not go at all."

Her desire was accomplished by degrees. After a while grinding on Sundays became a somewhat rare occurrence; then it was an established rule to shut the

mill at three o'clock on Sunday morning; and a few years later it was regularly closed at twelve on Saturday night, leaving her nothing more to wish for.

When Mrs. Cooke was married the drunkenness of harvest-home was unchecked; even religious men were accustomed to indulge their labourers too freely with strong beer. A gentleman of property, at Stalham, who filled the office of deacon in the church at Ingham, was accustomed at the end of harvest to regale his friends in the parlour, while his men were entertained in the hall. Mr. and Mrs. Cooke used to be invited to these entertainments, and Mr. Cooke was anxious not to offend a gentleman with whom he did a good deal of business. He therefore wished his wife to visit their neighbour with him at these seasons. But she could not feel at home in such a party, where, if there was no intemperance, there was not likely to be much religion; and between her reluctance, and her desire to please her husband, her mind was much perplexed. She thus notices the subject, Sept. 5th, 1806:—

"This was a trying evening. Mr. C. wished me to go with him to Mr. ——'s, and I thought it inconsistent. I had a great combat in my mind to know my duty; at last I thought, that as I was united to him, I ought to study peace and affection, and feeling that I could not be easy unless he was, I agreed to go. The words of Naaman came powerfully to my mind, 'When I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon his servant in this thing.'"

Once or twice more she went reluctantly to these gatherings; but after 1810 they were discontinued, on account of the death of the hospitable entertainer.

On May 8th, 1806, her first child was born,—a daughter, who was destined to watch by her dying bed. She was thus introduced to new joys, and with them, new cares and trials. For a time the babe necessarily occupied her chief attention, and she began to pray for its conversion as soon as it was born. But she could not forget the child of her departed sister; and when the first few months of the infant's life had passed, the two little ones had an equal part in her care and affection.

January 16th, 1807, she writes:—

"What great cause I have to magnify the Lord! I am blest with the bounties of Providence, a kind and tender partner, and two children whom I love. For though one of them is not mine by birth, he is doubly dear to me. I have fostered him from his infancy, and the regard I have for the memory of his dear mother will ever influence me to love him."

A few months later we find her admiring, with maternal fondness, the baby's first efforts to walk and prattle; but she notices with equal interest the steadiness and the consciousness of responsibility with which the elder child watched over and protected his sister.

In July, 1808, Mrs. Beane, a sister of Mr. Cooke's, died in the Lord. Mrs. Cooke has given a short account of Mr. Beard's funeral sermon for her, which is described as "a delightful discourse: clear and very long, but not tedious." The text of this discourse was Psalm cxvi, 7: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." The preacher stated that the text had been very profitable to the soul of the deceased. He said that he had visited her several times

during her illness, and believed her to be a real Christian. At first he found her filled with fears lest all should not be right; afterwards, lamenting that her heart had been so much after the cares of the world; yet enabled to hope in the Lord. At his last visit she appeared quite passive in the hands of God, and casting her soul on his mercy as discovered in the gift of his dear son. Mrs. Cooke adds, "His soul seemed wrapped up in the welfare of the relatives of the deceased; and he spoke so feelingly and tenderly to the children, that he could not himself refrain from tears. His attention was much turned to young persons throughout the discourse."

In December our dear relative had a return of the lowness of spirits which affected her so much before her marriage. Mr. Beard visited her; and his conversation gave her much relief. At the close of the year she writes,

> "'Thus far the Lord has led me on,
> And made his truth and mercy known;
> My hopes and fears alternate rise,
> And comforts mingle with my sighs.
> Temptations everywhere annoy,
> And sins and doubts my hopes destroy;
> My earthly joys are from me torn,
> And oft an absent God I mourn.'

Yet, through mercy, though 'faint,' I desire yet to be 'pursuing.'" At the beginning of the next year she appears to have recovered her usual spirits.

In April, 1809, a son was added to her family, who received the name of Robert: but after a few days of severe suffering he died. On this subject she wrote:—

"This is a much heavier trial to me than I could have imagined; yet I desire to be thankful it was not Samuel. I never before knew what it was to lose *a part of myself*. Lord, thy ways are past finding out; yet I trust I shall in the end have to say, It was good for me to be thus afflicted."

Just at the same time, Samuel himself was dangerously ill with hooping cough; and his sister soon after took the same disorder, so that the mother's trials were heavy when she had little strength to bear them. She continued weak and depressed for some time; and she gratefully acknowledges the kindness of her husband during her affliction.

On June 8th he had occasion to go to London; and as Mrs. Cooke was now pretty well recovered, and needed relaxation, he took her with him. Here she was in the midst of novelties and attractions; but none of them seem to have made any impression on her. On Monday, 19th, they went down to Windsor; but the only notice of her visit to the seat of royalty is, "We went to Windsor, so could not go out to hear in the evening!" But these pages of her pocket-book are crowded with the names of the ministers she heard, their texts, and the character of their sermons; almost all of which delighted her very much. On this occasion she heard Mr. Jay, of Bath, at Spa Fields' Chapel. Altogether she spent ten days in London, including two Sundays, and during that time attended sixteen religious services!

As the travellers used their own horse for the journey, they spent part of six days on the road, and reached home June 24th; the following day, being Sunday, Mrs. Cooke went to Worstead, and rejoiced to witness

the reception of five newly-baptized persons into the church. But she was very unwell, probably from the fatigue and excitement she had gone through. On the following day she was worse, and continued ill for some weeks; indeed she says, "I know not that ever I had such a severe affliction." At first her mind was clouded, but afterwards she was enabled to rejoice in the Lord. After about four weeks' illness, her usual health returned.

The following account of a journey from Mundesley, if it exhibits her natural timidity, exhibits no less her readiness to go to the Scriptures for guidance and comfort:—

"*August 14th.* In coming from my sister's I felt fearful, as the evening was dark; and I thought, if we came by ourselves, something unpleasant might happen. Mr. Cooke was quite willing to come round with my brothers, if I wished it; and the words being brought to my mind, 'A threefold cord is not easily broken,' and 'woe to him that is alone when he falleth,' I thought it best to go round. But then I knew I should have to go through the water at Deep Bridge, which I much dreaded; but the Lord graciously supported my mind by giving me that kind promise, 'When thou passest through the *waters* I will be with thee.' The words brought tears of gratitude to my eyes and comfort to my soul; and when I went through the water I felt every fear gone. Thus I trust it will be with me in dying. I then feared the rest of the journey, when our friends left us; but just at the time of parting with them, a faithful and gracious God comforted me with the following words, 'Lo, I am with you *always*.' This was a sweet cordial; my spirits revived, I had a comfortable journey home, and felt in

such a frame of mind as I have seldom enjoyed. O that I may learn to love and trust my Lord more than ever."

On September 26th, 1809, Mr. and Mrs. Cooke attended the public services at the settlement of the now venerable James Browne, of North Walsham. Mrs. Cooke greatly enjoyed the day; and her pleasure was much increased by the interest which her husband took in the services; for she was keenly alive to everything which shewed his growing attachment to spiritual things.

It will be remembered that when the three sisters entered the church at Worstead, they had to relate their experience in the midst of a large congregation, as the church meetings were at that time held in public. This practice, so contrary to modern ideas of propriety, will have excited so much attention in the mind of the reader, that we may be right to say, it was abolished at a church meeting, which Mrs. Cooke attended, March 11th, 1810.

Mr. Beane, who had married Mr. Cooke's sister, died May 1st, 1810, less than two years after her death had left him a widower. He was regarded with much respect by the family, and left behind him a good hope. Mr. and Mrs. Cooke were summoned to his death-bed, but arrived too late to witness his departure. Mrs. Cooke took the opportunity to address the children "in a solemn exhortation to seek real religion in early life; to avoid worldly company; to abstain from strife one with another; not to grieve immoderately, remembering the good hope we had, that their dear parents, who had had a short parting, had now a happy meeting; and to consider how it would increase their joy to meet their children in the world of bliss."

Mr. James Cubitt was married in the same year, July 18th; and three days after, his mother, who had been living with him, came to live at Stalham, where she continued to the end of her days. This change was a great blessing to her; her daughter was very anxious for her spiritual welfare, and, now that they were so near together, had better opportunities of conversing with her. Already Mrs. Cooke had begun to hope that the light of truth was dawning on her mother's heart; for some months before, after a visit to Beeston, the following observation was inserted in the diary:—

"I am very glad to find my mother seems to know the plan of salvation; and I really hope she knows something of religion in reality: we had some serious talk in the forenoon." After the venerable lady's change of residence, other conversations with her daughter took place, with much advantage to herself.

Mrs. Cooke, however, seems to have felt a difficulty in close conversation with her mother, which she seldom felt with other people. This difficulty diminished her comfort in such interviews, and perhaps made them less frequent than they might have been. To this she refers in the following lamentation, written August 31st, 1810.

"I am frequently ashamed of my unprofitableness; though I believe my mother has no dislike to hear me talk on religious subjects, yet I feel such backwardness. I am much distressed to think how little I live to the glory of God and the honour of his name.

'Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In this cold heart of mine.'"

Hitherto family prayer had not been regularly conducted at the mill-house; the omission occasioned Mrs. Cooke much uneasiness; and in the beginning of October she says,

"I told my dear Mr. C—— that I was more than ever convinced it was my duty to go to prayer in the family; and I wished to know if he had any objection. He answered that he should like it. This eased my mind, though I still dreaded beginning. But as I feared I might get more timid, I was led to begin, and was helped and comforted."

As she had previously been accustomed to pray with her husband, and the addition of the maid servant and children would hardly account for her timidity, it is probable the young men were included in "the family." If so, this must be the change referred to in the narrative, but assigned there to a later date.

"In the year 1812 (1810?) I was led to pray that family worship might be more completely observed in our house, by the attendance of the apprentices and journeymen with us. Through mercy this was accomplished; and some years after, one of our apprentices dated his conversion from hearing the Scriptures read, one Sunday morning, at family worship. To God be all the glory!"

This was probably either Thomas Miles, or Edward Leatherdale. These young men were at Mr. Cooke's at the same time; and both seem to have received their first religious impressions there, though the latter had a respect for religion when he came. On November 18th, 1813, Mrs. Cooke writes:—

"Young Edward Leatherdale has been at ours from before Michaelmas; he attends the means of grace very closely."

Again December 2nd, she writes thus:—

"The maid servant and Thomas Miles tell me Edward prays; Thomas got him to pray out last week. How thankful we ought to be for the change in our family. *Glory to God!*"

The ears of these young men were now opened to the voice of instruction; and they had, in Mrs. Cooke, a friend able and willing to counsel and encourage them. She watched with lively interest the progress of religion in their souls; and was always ready to aid them with kind and judicious words. She had her reward in their steadfastness and growth in grace. They both became decidedly pious. Thomas Miles left the mill, to study for the ministry at Stepney College, in the autumn of 1817; and, after completing his course there, was ordained pastor of the Baptist church at Aldeburgh, in Suffolk, where he died young. Edward Leatherdale continued in business till his death, which occurred some years later than Mr. Miles's. But they both reached the kingdom of the Father many years before their kind instructress, to whose faithfulness they were witnesses before the throne.

CHAPTER V.

SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION.

We now resume Mrs. Cooke's narrative:—

"I have had several severe afflictions; particularly one, in 1811, which lasted upwards of fourteen weeks, during which my dear husband was unabating in his kindness and attention, carrying me from one room to another, and up and down stairs as I required, and often praying with me. From this affliction, through mercy, I was gradually raised again to enjoy good health, and to watch over dear little Samuel and Mary; and O that I may live to see them both the followers of Jesus!

"That I hope was a sanctified affliction. Previously I seem to have been in a stupor or slumber; but then I felt the emptiness of all earthly things, expecting repeatedly that I was just about to enter eternity. One evening particularly, as I repeated the following verse, I felt every word as a fact:—

> '*Soon* shall I pass the gloomy vale:
> *Soon* all my mortal powers must fail.
> O may my last expiring breath
> His lovingkindness sing in death!'

[illegible] with the visits and [illegible] Christian friends, were [illegible] and from this time I seemed [illegible] to God, and my [illegible] was concerned [illegible] for me and rose [illegible] an humble servant. I hope my [illegible] to leave the world and not to go to [illegible] business called me. When we [illegible] at our house, we spent that illness, it [illegible] to pray with and read an address, [illegible] to win souls to Christ."

[illegible] the addresses Mrs. Cooke was accustomed to prepare for social parties will be found in an appendix with specimens of addresses prepared for other occasions and of the letters she was accustomed to write to those whom she wished to benefit, but whom she could not personally reach. When her pastor or any other minister was present at her social parties, she would ask for an address from him instead of preparing one herself. Thus for a brief period after tea her parlour became a place of religious worship and instruction; and thus she often succeeded in turning the thoughts of her visitors from worldly things to eternity and heaven, and giving a serious and profitable tone to the conversation which followed.

On June 9th, she was so far recovered from her painful but useful affliction as to be again at the house of God; and she was greatly affected both with gratitude and humiliation at the kindness of her friends, who shewed their sense of her worth by their joy at her recovery.

"My dear Jesus," says she, "how little does my heart glow with gratitude to thee! Surely I feel more thankfulness to thine instruments than I do to thyself, which causes my heart to be pained. Mr. and Mrs. Cubitt were so kind as to lend us their headed chaise home with us, and they took our gig. We could not get off it; they insisted on our taking it home in the afternoon. O that I may never forget the goodness of the Lord to poor unworthy me, in raising me up so many friends."

It is difficult to trace any evidences of the "stupor or slumber" in which she considered herself to have been before her affliction; and we may regard the complaint chiefly as proving the high degree of devotedness at which she aimed. But her Journal afterwards gives abundant evidence that she became, as she says, "concerned to live to him that died for her and rose again."

To this concern we may ascribe her anxiety to prevent what she regarded as an inconsistency in a professor of religion. There was a water frolic in the neighbourhood soon after her recovery, and a young disciple who was at work at her house wished to attend it. She says:—

"I found Miss —— had a desire to go, so I told her I would give her the time, but I must not be held accountable for the manner in which she spent it. It appeared a suitable reproof, for she declined going, and we spent a pleasant afternoon; she read and prayed, and I heard her comfortably."

A few days later the following entry occurs:—

Mr. C——'s family came, and my mother and Mrs. —— called in. I had written an address,* which I read,

* This address is No. 1 of the Social Addresses in the Appendix.

of the church at Ingham, modestly but earnestly expressing her desire.

In this, as in many other of her designs for the glory of God, she was not at once successful, but she persevered; and soon after Mr. Pickers became the pastor of the church she had the satisfaction to see the chapel regularly opened on Sabbath mornings.

On March 21st, 1812, another son was given to her, in the place of the little deceased one, who received his name, and was destined to live, to repay, in her declining years, the affectionate care with which she watched over his infancy and youth.

A few days before this event she wrote the following letter to her little daughter, then not six years old.

March 10th, 1812.

MY DEARLY BELOVED CHILD MARY,

It has pleased the blessed Lord to give you a mother who is not only concerned about your temporal comfort, but your eternal happiness especially; and though I have prayed with and advised you to seek the things which make for your eternal peace, yet I know nothing short of the grace of God on your heart can effect a change in your nature. You, my dear, are born in sin, exposed to the just displeasure of the Almighty, and nothing but an interest in the dear Redeemer can save you from the wrath to come. My ardent prayer for you is that you may be born again, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that you should walk in them. Yes, my dear child, you must be born again before you can enter the kingdom of

[illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

have said respecting the blessed Jesus, and the things which make for your everlasting welfare; never neglect your Bible, love it above all books, and pray to the Lord to open your understanding, that you may understand the Scriptures. Never close your eyes at night without praying to God to pardon your sins for Jesus' sake, nor rise in the morning without begging for his grace and direction; pray earnestly; beg for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, who is to take of the things of Jesus, and reveal them to poor sinners, who are made sensible of their lost estate and condition; and especially keep holy the Sabbath day; never neglect nor forsake the house of God; 'tis there we may hope to meet him and find his blessing; for he says, "where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them;" and O how much better is it to be with God's people than the people of the world, for his people are the excellent of the earth, the favourites of heaven. Consider my dear girl, could I know it, or were I alive to witness it, how it would grieve my heart to know that you forsake the house of prayer. O shun gay and vain company, they will lead you aside from true happiness and God. I hope it will please the blessed Lord to spare your dear father's life, to bring you up in the fear, nurture, and admonition of the Lord. Regard your father's commands, study his happiness and interest, and then you will be studying your own. I trust he will be concerned to place you in a religious school, where your eternal interest will be attended to more than your natural endowments; endeavour then to benefit by such means and helps to your soul's welfare, and prefer the society and strict friendship of those who

are piously disposed. Be truly kind and affectionate to poor dear Samuel, whom I love with a parental tenderness; and should I leave a helpless infant, be kind to it, and as it grows in years endeavour to teach it hymns as I taught you, and what you know by your sixth year may that know at the same age. And should you live up to womanhood, endeavour to please your father in such connection as you may form, as I trust, his desire will be that you may never marry any one that is not seriously inclined; and remember, my dear, this is my dying request, that you never change your condition to unite with one that has no reverence for God and holy things; shun the society of such as are hollow professors, who talk but do not; our Lord says, "by their fruits ye shall know them;" to this dear blessed Lord I commit you, begging that he may guide you by his counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory, that so we may meet to part no more. One thing more I would say, consider death may call you away in your early bloom; then "seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." And now my dear girl, adieu; weep not as without hope; be resigned to my departure; remember the Lord has a right to do as he pleases; value the dear friends you have left you, and may their prayers be heard and answered for you. This is the prayer of your affectionate mother,

SOPHIA COOKE.

P.S. Be sure never frequent plays, balls, and card parties; they belong to the prince of darkness, not to the Lord of light.

During Mrs. Cooke's withdrawment from her usual place in the family, her husband for the first time conducted family worship. This was a great pleasure to her, and she thus refers to it :—

"I have long prayed that he might, and begged he would. How happy I felt at it I cannot describe."

After this period Mrs. Cooke and her husband shared the duty between them.

On October 25th, Mr. Wilks, of Norwich, came to Ingham to collect for the mission, in consequence of the fire which destroyed the printing office at Serampore. The amount collected was upwards of £19, towards which Mr. and Mrs. Cooke contributed liberally.

In 1813 the chapel at Ingham was enlarged. In this work, under the meek and zealous promptings of his wife, Mr. Cooke was very diligent and hearty. The following entry in the journal displays his liberality and zeal; and may be further useful, in leading his descendants to look for their encouragement in the service of God, to his approval, rather than to the smiles of their fellow men.

"*Sunday, July* 18*th*, 1813. I heard tolerably well, through mercy. Of late I have been uneasy about the people not being satisfied and thankful. Though so much has been done, and many have devoted so much of their time and property, yet a discontented, meddling spirit seems to have crept in; but I hope the Lord will purge it out. I have had the pleasure to see Mr. Cooke leave his own concerns with cheerfulness, and often, very often, come home to a cold dinner; he has gone to market to buy deals, and other things that were wanted, —has exerted himself to get the bricks carted,—has

given many thousand bricks and a large sum of money,—yet has got no thanks, nor even given satisfaction. Well, it is the Lord who permits it, and I hope it will keep us humble at his feet."

For the greater part of this year her mind was much exercised on account of the serious illness of her brother James. On April 10th she writes:—

"I felt very low about dear brother James, he is very poorly, and has been for advice, and the doctors say he has a liver complaint. O my dear James, may the Lord in mercy spare you, and raise you up again.

"23*rd*. Dear brother James came down to mother's, and I chatted with him some time; I asked him if he enjoyed religion; he wept much; he could not say that he did; he knew there was no way of salvation but through Christ, and begged I would pray that his affliction might be sanctified."

We may be fully assured that this request was complied with.

May 8th she saw him again at her own house. She says:—

"Dear James is a little better, through mercy; I hope the Lord will sanctify the affliction, and spare his life. I had but little conversation with him; but the duty I owe my Lord, and the love I bear his soul, constrained me to say, 'my brother has asked me to pray for him, and if he likes I will do it now.' This was assented to, and through the goodness of the Lord I was helped through, and it seemed a weeping season both to him and his wife; O that it may be for their souls' good and God's glory."

As his illness increased, he went to London for advice July 24th, leaving his affectionate sister full of anxiety lest the journey should be too much for him. Three weeks later she was much agitated at learning that he was too ill to return at the time intended; but a few days after she had the satisfaction to find by a letter from himself, both that he was better, and that religion was still uppermost in his thoughts. But his health continued changeable. She saw him again, after his return, when he was under much anxiety lest his his concern should subside on his recovery. He afterwards sank, for a time, into a settled melancholy. In the spring of 1814, he paid a short visit to his sister, and visited, with her, the death-bed of Miss S. Thain, who spoke encouragingly to him. He left Stalham much improved both in health and spirits.

On September 6th, 1813, Mr. Robert Cooke, of Stalham, brother-in-law of Mrs. Cooke, was attacked by brain fever, and died in a few days. He was a man of an unusually powerful frame; and as he had not been weakened by previous illness, his struggles with death were fearfully violent. As he was a bachelor, and his house was very near the mill, his death imposed much labour on Mrs. Cooke, so that she was obliged to suspend her journal, and we have no records of the event. But she has left behind copious extracts from his funeral sermon, preached by Mr. Pickers, which afford good reason to hope that he had passed from death unto life.

In the latter part of 1814 Mrs. Cooke was withdrawn from the public worship of God, and from active duty, by the birth of another son, which took place October

[illegible] He was named Henry, after his father's surviving brother, and still lives to cherish the memory of his mother's virtues. On this occasion she mentions, with thankfulness, that her daughter, now a little more than eight years old, was very useful in attending to little Robert, whose desire to be with his mamma might otherwise have caused her some fatigue. During her seclusion she at one time complained of dullness and fretfulness; but generally she was more happy than usual in her soul. After three Sundays' absence from the house of God, she was enabled to appear at Worstead chapel, to return public thanks for her recovery.

On November 29th, Mr. William Cubitt died. Mrs. Cooke was with him the last two hours of his life, and witnessed its peaceful close. Her affection for this dear brother had a firmer basis than that of family connection, for he had been of material use to her in the earliest period of her Christian life. They were much alike too in the character of their religion; equally disposed to regard the conversion of sinners as the great object of their lives. He was the chief instrument of the introduction of the gospel into Neatishead, and the formation of the church of which Mr. Spurgeon was so many years the faithful pastor. His humble piety and zeal for God are still remembered with affection by some of the older members of the church at Neatishead; and will doubtless be acknowledged in the great day, when many professed services to the cause of religion, which have attracted greater attention, and won louder applause, shall have been consumed as wood, and hay, and stubble, in the general fire.

His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. Spurgeon,

from 2 Timothy iv, 7, 8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

The following short paragraph in a letter to her daughter, then at school at Yarmouth, must have been written about this time:—

"I hope you do not forget the Lord, your soul, and eternity. Recollect, the Almighty says, 'I love those that love me, and those who seek me early shall find me.' The Saviour says, 'What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul.' Bear in mind the solemn truth, 'that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.' May the Lord impress these things on your mind, that you may be convinced of their importance more than ever."

Up to this period Mrs. Cooke was a member of the church at Worstead, where she made her public profession when a girl. While she was single her attendance there was very constant, and after her marriage it was as frequent as circumstances would permit. Mr. Cooke also had been in the habit, from his earliest years, of attending there with his mother, who was a member of the church. He himself, however, had not joined it. Indeed his transition from a state of worldliness to the service of Christ was so gradual, that, for a long time after it had begun, he himself was not satisfied of its reality. As his family increased it became more difficult to attend at Worstead. They therefore generally worshipped at Ingham, and soon began to identify

themselves with the cause there. This was proved by their liberality when the chapel was enlarged in 1813, and by the activity with which Mr. Cooke assisted in the work. When, therefore, he was prepared to make an open profession of religion, he joined the church at Ingham, as a matter of course: he was baptised by Mr. Spurgeon, January 22nd, 1815; Mrs. Cooke, having obtained her dismission from Worstead, was admitted into the church at Ingham at the same time with her husband.

As family cares increased upon her, the entries in the diary became fewer and shorter. The first, in 1815, is dated February 10th. Viewed in connection with the cares of an increasing family, with young men in the house, and the assistance of only one servant, it shews exemplary diligence in doing the work of the Lord.

"A good day to my soul. Attended the funeral of good Mrs. Cubitt, at Honing; visited neighbour Harmer, of Smallburgh, on my way home; Mrs. Harwood, Peggs, and Alcock, after I got home; read to old Mr. Peggs, 'Dialogue between a Minister and his Parishioners.' Found the Lord's work *wages*. In the evening Mr. Dawson was at ours; he engaged in prayer, and conversed pleasantly and piously. But ere I retired to bed I found my heart grow cold. Thus I am taught not to trust on a Christ within, but to live on a Christ above."

A further proof of her activity in the service of God is afforded, by a list of the letters written, chiefly on subjects connected with religion, in the following year.

"Wrote a letter to Miss Beane when ill; ditto to Mrs. Beane when her child died. Wrote to Mr. ——

on his being restored to church fellowship. To Mr. Baker, of Upton, on preaching the gospel; to brother —— on the duty of relatives; to brother —— advising him to diligence in duty; to brother —— on submission to Providence; to Mrs. Whitaker, of London; to Mr. Sturtevant, of London, to beg books for the Sunday School; to Mr. Masset, to thank him for books for Mr. Baker's Sunday School, and a one pound note for the expenses of opening a house for preaching the gospel; to Mr. Beard, of Scarborough, acknowledging the receipt of his, and thanking him for past labours, as a father in Christ. Wrote to Mrs. Masset, of London, a friend I never saw, but with whom I correspond on spiritual affairs in our own souls, the church, and the world. Letitia Pickers was the cause of my first writing to her; she got her a place. Wrote to Mr. R. Silcock on church-fellowship and deadness to the world; to W. Cubitt, on prayer and the religion of the heart, or the new birth, and on not trusting to the prayers of departed or living relatives; to Mrs. ——; a note in answer to Mr. R. Silcock's letter; to Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon, on the death of their little daughter Sophia; to brother John twice; a plan and address to the adults of our school; a note to Mr. Spurgeon on slow speaking in preaching; to brother —— about Mrs. ——; to Mrs. Massett, to acknowledge the receipt of a letter, and a one pound note for Mr. Baker, of Upton; to a lady who sent it; an address to a young person, and read it, *(a time for all things;)* to brother John, encouraging him to have a prayer meeting, or attend evening lectures; to sister Hastings, encouraging her to attend public worship; to brother Benjamin, to ask him a favour for Mr. Hastings and brother John; to

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

of this character; and often, when alarming illness or great spiritual anxiety presented a claim of peculiar urgency, the same individual was visited daily, or even several times in a day. Indeed she appeared to consider this duty as absolute and obligatory as if she had been specifically appointed to it. Thus in October, 1820, she wrote in her diary:—

"O that this week may never be forgotten by me! Two comparatively sudden deaths of neighbours, whose eternal happiness is doubtful, are a heavy weight on my mind. Yet I desire to be thankful that *I was at my post by their bedsides*. But, oh, the thought, if I should not be faithful, if I should neglect the soul for the sake of the present ease of the afflicted, was heavy on my mind."

And so well was she qualified, by the liveliness of her own piety, and by constant practice, for the efficient discharge of this duty, that her visits were eagerly sought by the anxious and the sick; and many, there is no doubt, are now in glory, whom she was the principal instrument of snatching as brands from the burning. Thus she resembled in a remarkable degree, "those women" of whom the apostle Paul says, that they "laboured with him in the gospel;" and she has doubtless been welcomed by them as a kindred spirit in the world above.

CHAPTER VI.

OUTWARD TRIALS.

Mrs. Cooke's trials had been chiefly spiritual; or if others had occasionally visited her they were only such, in character and number, as are allotted to most dwellers in the vale of tears. Now, however, calamities for a time pressed upon her with great severity.

In the year 1815, and one or two subsequent years, heavy losses were endured. In particular, the termination of the French War had led to a sudden fall in the price of the miller's *raw material*, wheat, which brought ruin upon many. The shock was felt severely by Mr. Cooke, and other losses of considerable amount occurred at the same time. He was remarkable for his firmness, yet these occurrences depressed his spirits in the day time, and broke his rest at night. His wife was much less fitted by nature for such a crisis; and it is no matter of surprise, therefore, that while she felt greatly for her husband, her own anxieties should be excited in a high degree. Under these anxieties, and the depression they occasioned, she fled for consolation to the gospel of Christ, and to the providential care of her covenanted Father, to

whom she had committed her soul. The aspect of the times was rendered still more threatening by a very unpropitious harvest. Saturday, October 5th, she writes:—

"A wet week; scarcely any harvest work done. At times I feel anxious, at other times calm, thinking that the Lord punishes us less than our iniquities deserve.

"*Tuesday, 8th.* Wet again; a great deal of rain yesterday and to-day. The judgments of the Lord are seen amongst us. The harvest cannot be got on with.

"*9th.* Prayer meeting. Friends Loudon, Miles, and Pickers engaged in prayer; but as all forgot to pray about the weather, I begged Mr. Pickers to let a few minutes be occupied by Mr. Silcock in confession and humiliation for sin, and in entreating the Lord to take off his chastening hand, and permit us to gather up the fruits of the earth, which now seem in a perishing condition, the wheat grown much, the barley more."

A more cheerful entry on November 11th reveals with equal clearness the unfavourableness of the season.

"A dry, cold, windy day; wind frost very sharp. People carting barley at a great rate."

It would have been strange if, amid all these discouraging occurrences, her mind had remained unmoved, especially as her constitutional tendency was rather to look at the dark side of things. The conflict of her feelings is painfully exhibited in the following extract.

"Through mercy I am out of hell; but at times I feel a kind of hell within me. Never did I meet with more conflict from old Adam than of late. A peevish, perverse, dissatisfied, murmuring spirit rises within me, which my soul trembles at. I have been tempted to such wicked thoughts against the Sovereign of the world, that at times

I have been afraid that to pray to him was all mockery. Oh the hardness of my mind. May I be enabled to hope still. If not, believing I shall yet praise him for giving me the victory over Satan. I fear I go backward instead of forward. I see so little desire to visit the sick, to pray in my family, and to speak for God: and when I do, am harassed by the fear that my manner condemns me in what I talk of. I am wretched.'

These pangs of a rebellious spirit were more distressing to her than any outward sorrow, and she says spontaneously a little after.

"My greatest trial in earth is my own sinful nature."

Yet even now she could sometimes take her harp from the willows, and sing of the goodness of the Lord. In a rapid sketch of the favours received during the year 1816, which was written at the close of it, she praises God

"For spiritual mercies, a continuance of the Bible to read, the throne of grace in public and private, a preached gospel, communion with the saints, support in difficulties, succour in temptation, and a hope of glory, when sin shall no more pain me."

Soon after we find her rejoicing as she had not recently done; and praising God for the enjoyment of much spirituality and deadness to the world.

CHAPTER VII.

MARRIED LIFE CONTINUED.

When Mrs. Cooke was a girl she was sent for some time to a boarding school at North Walsham, where she received an education equal to what was usually given at that time to young females of her class; but this was not very extensive. When she herself had become a mother, she did not wish to confine the education of her children to the somewhat narrow limits of her own; on the contrary, she was anxious they should receive all the advantages that could be obtained for them, consistently with their spiritual interests, and with the preservation of habits suited to their rank in life. Under the influence of this desire her daughter was sent for education to Yarmouth; and at Midsummer, 1818, she was removed to a boarding school in Norwich. The young lady probably came home at Christmas full of the novel entertainments of the breaking up, for at that time her mother made the following remarks in her diary:—

"I have been a good deal hurt in my mind, at Mary's going to Mr. ——'s recitation and to Miss ——'s ball, as I fear this has given her a relish for such amusements as I wish not to have her pursue."

Mrs. Cooke carried her objections to popular amusements further than many pious people; but the language here employed shews that she had, at least, an intelligent reason for them. Her objection to the children's ball was founded on the effect it was likely to produce. She does not condemn dancing as sinful in itself, but she objects to the love and practice of it as more likely to do harm than good; she would not have her daughter get a taste for such amusements, lest she should "pursue" them; and she dreaded this result from the conviction, that such a pursuit would indispose her for religion, for domestic duty, and for rational enjoyment. The most earnest desire of the mother was to train her child for heaven; and, therefore, she would rather see her in the house of God than in the ball room; in the closet for private prayer, rather than wasting her hours in preliminary decorations, or in consequent weariness and exhaustion. She knew from experience that such amusements were unfavourable to the growth of religion, if they were not altogether inconsistent with its life; and she coveted both its life and its growth for her daughter, more than the most attractive accomplishments, the most perfect grace of motion, or the most enviable connections among the brilliant and the fashionable. No one probably will deny that there is at least some danger, lest the excitements of gay life should make the duties of the kitchen or the work-table dull and distasteful, and at the same time beget an unwillingness to think of the soul and the Saviour—of death and eternity. Mrs. Cooke regarded herself as entrusted by God with the formation of her daughter's character, and she wished to [illegible] good account of her stewardship. Under the

influence of these solemn considerations, she could not act otherwise than she did; and the nearer we approach to her spirituality of mind, the more likely shall we be to partake her convictions and to approve her conduct.

Her earnest solicitude for her daughter's improvement in every branch of useful learning, and especially in the knowledge of salvation, cannot be better illustrated than by a note written to her about eight months afterwards, while she was at the same school.

"I hope my dear Mary is using every effort to improve in every branch of her education, and thus merit the esteem of both teachers and parents. How is it, my love? Will my hopes be realized or blighted? If blighted, how keen the anguish of a wounded parent's heart! Think of the many earnest prayers that have been offered for you, and the frequent admonitions you have received; and consider the blank it will turn up in our lives, if you do not answer our expectations. Let me have the happiness, if spared to the vacation, of finding in you an increasing thoughtfulness in the affairs of life. But above all strive after a heartfelt experience of the power of religion. You know Jehovah has never said to the seeking seed of Jacob, 'seek ye me in vain;' but has said for your great encouragement, 'I love them that love me, and those who seek me early shall find me.' I was much gladdened to learn that you pay attention to what you hear preached. Be assured my dear girl, however much I am prevented from dwelling on these, to me delightful subjects, my heart's desire and prayer for you daily is that you may never neglect the things which belong to your eternal peace, lest you die unconverted, and they be for ever hid from your eyes."

Her youngest son was born April 26th, 1819. He received the name of William in joint remembrance of his deceased uncle and of a babe who had died, at three months old, the year before. The birth of this, her last child, was a period of great distress to her. Her son Henry too was unwell at the same time, and Robert was attacked with scarlet fever. But she slowly recovered, and, in the meantime received much comfort and benefit from the conversation and prayers of pious friends, and from the hymns of Dr. Doddridge.

Mrs. Cooke did not love company, in the ordinary sense of the word; mere gaiety and idle chat were thoroughly distasteful to her; with banter and repartee she had no sympathy, and hardly cared to understand them; in her esteem they were but wasted breath; so that a party of wits would excite in her only pity or weariness. And burdened as she was with domestic cares, with little help, pained limbs, and an aching head, the trouble of providing an entertainment was no little thing to her.

When she had "a party" at her house, therefore, it cost her an amount of fatigue which those who enjoyed her hospitality were little aware of; and she never undertook it, but from a sense of duty, and with the determination to make it, if possible, of use to the souls of her guests. With this view she introduced the practice already referred to, of either reading an appropriate religious address on such occasions, or begging one from any minister who might be in the company. Idle calls, or unexpected visits from those who were neither ready to receive religious benefit, nor to impart it, were unwelcome to her; and that irritation, so much com-

plained of by herself, but so little observable, was never more apt to be excited than by such intrusions.

But it was far otherwise when the servants of Christ, and especially when his ministers came to her house. Their visits, when unexpected, were not always convenient; but the interruption was cheerfully submitted to, and she at once proceeded to turn it to the best account. Commonly she would not be long without asking her visitor to engage in prayer; and then all the household, who were at liberty, were summoned to join in the exercise. When the visit was of longer duration, the same readiness to use hospitality towards a servant of Christ was displayed, and the same desire to improve the visit to the benefit of herself and others.

Amongst her most frequent guests for some years, were Mr. Spurgeon and, before he came to reside at Stalham, the late Mr. Baker. They are repeatedly mentioned in her diary as coming, often unexpectedly; the former sometimes stayed for days together; and she continually speaks of the pleasure and the profit these visits afforded her. The late Mr. Clarke, of Worstead, also, up to the time of his death, was often an uninvited, and always a welcome guest; and there was no house at which he called with more pleasure, or where he felt more thoroughly at home.

In the month of March, 1820, Mrs. Cooke entertained her friend Mr. Spurgeon, on an occasion of peculiar interest to her. He was accompanied by Mr. Sparkhall, Mrs. Cooke's brother-in-law, and by Mr. John Clowes, her father's successor in the tenancy of the farm at Neatishead, and one of the chief supporters of the Baptist interest there. Soon after the formation

[illegible] Newcastle. a chapel had been [illegible] accommodation. in the erection of which Mr. [illegible] had taken great interest, and in which he had assisted by personal labour. as well as by contributions to the full extent of his means. But this chapel [illegible] was burdened with a debt, which amounted to £[illegible]. The object of the visit of these two friends to Stalham mill. was to remove it. This was accomplished by Mr. Clowes giving £100, and Mr Stannard and Mr Cooke £60 each. After this good work was completed. they sang together the [illegible]

"[illegible] old."

and Mr Spurgeon offered up thanksgiving and prayer.

This was a joyful event to Mrs. Cooke. Neatishead always held a high place in her affections. It was her birthplace and the commencement of the Baptist cause there, through her brother's efforts, was nearly contemporaneous with her own conversion. Hers was just the temperament to be much affected with these considerations. She wept with delight and gratitude at the extinction of the debt, and almost wished that her glorified brother might return for a space to the scene of his labours, that he might partake the joy.

The year 1821 opened upon Mrs. Cooke with a gratification which may be readily conceived. Her daughter was to leave school at Christmas 1820; and her mother's satisfaction in looking forward to this event had been diminished by the fear of finding her gay and worldly; not an unlikely effect of her association with so many young people, many of whom had been

brought up in all the follies of the world. But it soon appeared that her beloved child was under deep concern about her soul. This was the first instance of decided seriousness among her children. It was an answer to many earnest prayers, and the desired reward of much watchfulness and fidelity.

She had now the prospect of watching the work of grace upon the heart of her daughter, and administering the instructions, cautions, and encouragements, which the course of her experience might require. For this work the thankful mother was eminently qualified, and she performed it with a fidelity to which her love supplied new earnestness.

She appears to have been more happy than usual, too, in her own religious experience. She says in her diary:—

"After spending three days in very busy scenes, I went to Ingham, to the prayer-meeting, and heard friends Croxton and Pickers very comfortably in prayer. I was then called on to engage, and in the exercise had, I trust, much of the presence of the Lord: I know not when I have been more inwardly happy. When I came home I had to engage in family prayer, and enjoyed much the same liberty: I felt great love for souls, and much longing for their salvation. Glory be to God."

The following record belongs to the same period:—

"I have much to record of the goodness of God to my soul. I desire to be thankful I am not without hopes that I am going on in the way to the heavenly Jerusalem. It is true I am very slow in my progress, but, through the help of the dear Saviour, I hope I shall not fall short of it. I have to lament daily sins and infirmities, yet at times I have great delight in holiness, and pant after it.

I often lament my want of love to the dear Redeemer: ye I hope that I do love him, his people, his ways, and hi ordinances. At some seasons my soul burns with desire to be useful to my fellow immortals; and I feel such love for missionaries and other good people who love Christ in sincerity, that the mention of what is doing in the Christian world causes tears to start from my eyes. I feel much interest in Sunday schools, our own in particular."

Her interest in the Sunday school was not a barren sentiment. She was a zealous and very useful teacher, from its establishment, till growing years and infirmities compelled her to decline the office; and still her interest remained, and took such new forms as her condition permitted. She distributed books among the children, and often addressed them on the concerns of their souls, skilfully choosing those occasions when their minds had been prepared by some striking event to receive her exhortations. Very many written addresses, of considerable length, and much adaptedness, still remain, and specimens of them will be found in the Appendix.

In fact scarcely anything which might tend to the promotion of God's glory was neglected or forgotten by her; without the official title, she was just what we may suppose the ancient deaconess to have been. And while constantly active herself, she was always ready to stir up her brethren to every action by which she thought they might serve the cause of Christ. The following is a fragment of a letter to the deacons of the church at Ingham: the former part of the letter is unfortunately lost.

"* * * * I know that the government of the church is on the shoulders of Christ, and that he will

carry on his cause and support his gospel; but still it is done by means, and with the poet I say,

"My heart shall pray for Zion still,
While life and breath remain."

Should you, my friends, be spared in your office as deacons when my body is crumbling to its original dust, let the words of a departed sister dwell in your minds, and influence your conduct to the pastor and the poor of the church at Ingham. As it regards the pastor, his spiritual comfort ebbs and flows much with the attention paid to his temporal support. I was much struck with the appeal made on behalf of the Stepney Academical Institution last Sunday, as being likely to draw the feelings of benevolence into exercise; and was led to think, if the Bible Society wants help in pecuniary matters, or the Missionary Society, or the Tract Society, or the Sunday School, or any other Society, ministers ably and feelingly plead its case, and much is raised to the funds which would not if there were only a notice given that a collection was to be made for such an Institution. But when a collection is made to benefit the minister's own salary he must be silent; and what is given by those who are not quarterly subscribers is, therefore, too apt to be coolly and sparingly given. This led me to think of the duty of deacons to do all they can to make up that difference by pointing out the duty of those who hear the gospel, and especially those who feel it, to contribute bountifully, not as a matter of charity but of debt, knowing that God has said that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. There is another duty belonging to deacons, which in my affliction I have

prosperity there are those attend who want a word spoken to them. A word from a deacon to know if they feel what they hear, or to encourage them to go forward

seeking the Lord, is a help to the pastor, and a duty belonging to deacons. That you, my dear friends, may go on and prosper in your work, and at length come off more than conquerors through him who hath loved you, is the prayer of, dear friends, your sister in Christ,

S. COOKE."

CHAPTER VIII.

BEREAVEMENTS.

Ever that marvellous vision in which the Apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure. In like manner the high spiritual enjoyment mentioned in the last chapter was followed by a season of proportionably keen distress. Within a very brief period some of her dearest friends were taken away from her.

Mrs. Brown, of Thetford, formerly Miss E. Silcock, died March 26th, 1821. Before this lady was married, Mrs. Cooke had been on terms of most affectionate intimacy with her, and this intimacy was maintained after she left Stalham, as far as circumstances would permit. When, therefore, her friend heard, early in this year, of her dangerous illness, she spoke of it as making the world appear a dreary wilderness, and the tidings that her valued correspondent was no more, deeply affected her.

But a heavier blow fell upon her a few months after,

the death of him whom she calls her "darling brother James." In September, 1821, he was attacked with brain fever, which speedily terminated his life. His sister appears to have cherished a particularly warm affection for him, and the strong hope she indulged that his trials had been useful to his soul increased her attachment. The loss of him, therefore, especially in circumstances so distressing, affected her deeply, and concern for the five children whom he left behind added poignancy to her sorrow. But in the God of Providence the fatherless found mercy; and she never ceased to adore the hand which has provided for them ever since.

Before this period Mrs. Cooke's mother had shewn many tokens of decay which had excited her daughter's sympathies and anxieties. These symptoms were noticed by herself also, and occasioned no alarm. Her attendance on evangelical preaching had been frequent and profitable: Mrs. Cooke's conversations and prayers, too, had been of great use, as well as those of Christian friends, whom the daughter was ever anxious to introduce, and the mother ready to receive. The happy result was that her views of the way of salvation had become clearer, and her hold on the promises more firm. Her favourite hymn was,

"Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone;
My hopes I fix on him alone;
His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way, till him I view.

* * * *

This is the way I long had sought,
And mourned because I found it not;
Till late I heard my Saviour say,
Come hither, soul, I am the way.

Lo! glad I come, and thou, blest Lamb,
Wilt now receive me as I am!
My sinful self to thee I give,
Nothing but love shall I receive."

Thus in the riches of divine mercy, through Christ, her soul found rest.

In 1821 she was attacked with paralysis, which weakened both body and mind, and on May, 31st, 1823, worn out with the activities of nearly eighty years,

"The weary wheels of life at length stood still."

Filial affection was disturbed at her departure, and tears flowed freely at the change; but thankfulness and joy mingled with sorrow that the aged parent was released from her long and trying affliction, and gone to spend an eternal Sabbath with the Lord. The following account was drawn up by Mrs. Cooke for the use of the minister in her mother's funeral sermon.

"She attributed her conversion to the blessing of God on a preached gospel; and from that time her mind was set on the close reading of the Scriptures and secret prayer. She frequently lamented that she could say so little for God; but, with humble mind, she shewed her love to him by a consistent life, keeping in mind that they who have believed in Christ should be careful to maintain good works. She had much pleasure in the visits of pious persons, and frequently expressed the profit she derived from the kind and pious regard manifested by the late Mrs. Thaine. Through her she derived much spiritual instruction and consolation, and greatly did she regret her loss. For several years before her death she was seldom able to attend a place of worship,

which made her anxious to have the visits of God's ministers; with these she was often favoured, and they greatly helped her in the way to Zion. She was favoured with a calm and easy frame of mind, at times lamenting her unworthiness and unprofitableness, but seldom without a hope that she was safe upon the sure foundation. She frequently said, 'The Lord Jesus and his merits are my sole dependence.' The latter part of her life, through the infirmities of old age, she was incapable of saying much; but she declared that her hope was in Jesus, and longed to depart to be with him; and nothing appeared to give her greater pleasure than conversation on the prospect of her leaving the body to behold, without a veil, the Lamb of God."

The death of Mrs. Thaine, referred to in this account, was one of a series which commenced some years earlier, and extended to a period later than this; and they may be conveniently noticed together because they occurred in the same family. That family was dear to Mrs. Cooke "both in the flesh and in the Lord."

Mrs. Thaine, of Ingham, was the first cousin of Mr. Cooke; but to his wife both she and her children were as sisters and brothers for the sake of Christ. Mrs. Thaine herself was especially endeared to her by a close similarity of Christian character. Mrs. Cooke visited her constantly in her last illness, which was very distressing. Sometimes she was quite delirious and in despair; but when she was rational she enjoyed a placid trust in the Saviour. On one of these occasions she took leave of Mrs. Cooke, by exchanging a kiss of sisterly affection, and saying, "I love you, ma'am." Her visitor feelingly replied, "We have long loved each other."

This "invaluable friend," as she is called in the diary, died July 30th, 1817.

Most of her children, too, died off in rapid succession, and left behind them bright evidences of grace. Their deaths are recorded by Mrs. Cooke in her diary, accompanied by expressions of tender regret, which shew that their spiritual relationship had brought them nearer to her heart than any family ties. She visited them in their illness; she watched with deep interest their dying beds; and she followed them to the grave with a lively and affectionate sorrow, chastened by the thought, that "as Jesus died, and rose again, them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

The death of friends not of her own family, too, cost Mrs. Cooke frequent distress. Human beings are susceptible of pain in the same degree as of pleasure; to weep with those who weep, and to rejoice with those who rejoice, are but different displays of the same virtuous disposition. This disposition was a decided characteristic of our beloved relative; it was not in her nature to be indifferent about any whom she knew. Her practice of visiting the sick, moreover, and the prevalent desire to obtain her counsels and prayers in seasons of affliction, brought her into frequent and very close contact with bereavement. When she could not entertain a good hope for a departed friend, she endured an intensity of grief which only those could feel who realized eternity as she did. And her sorrow was scarcely less acute, though of a different character, when a fellow-disciple was removed from the world, especially one with whom she had been accustomed to take sweet counsel on the things which were dearest to her. In such a case her attachment was

more close and tender than an ordinary friendship. No one could say more sincerely than she, "Grace be with all such as love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." To them she was united in heart in proportion as she had confidence in their piety. Her feelings at the loss of them consequently bore not a little resemblance to those excited by the death of her relatives after the flesh. She was not sorry for the departed, indeed, but she felt bereaved herself. Heaven was enriched she knew, but earth was poorer. And often as under a sense of the cares and perplexities, the imperfections and sinfulness of the world, she exclaimed, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest," she felt still more weary, as one after another of her fellow-pilgrims left her amid the troubles and temptations from which they were themselves released.

CHAPTER IX.

MARRIED LIFE. CONTINUED.

It was about this time (for the date cannot be exactly ascertained) that one of a company of strolling players *then* at Stalham brought her a bill announcing his benefit, *and requested* her patronage. On her refusal, he appealed *to her compassion* on account of the destitution of his *family*, but without obtaining his object. After he was *gone, however,* she considered that although she could *not countenance* his performances, there would be no *harm in relieving* him, and that she would thus obtain an *opportunity* of seeking the good of his soul. In the *exhortation* she sent him with her present, there is an *invitation* to the house of God, which is evidently framed *upon* the *model* of his bill.

"Mrs. Cooke's intention in sending this trifle to Mr. —— is to shew that she has a fellow feeling for human beings of all classes; and she would be glad to dissuade him from a way of life very unsuitable for forming the morals of his children, who ought to be trained to habits of industry. Mrs. C—— has a tender concern for the rising generation, and cannot help wishing

that their parents might see the importance of taking their children to the house of God, that they may hear the Scriptures read and expounded; for surely, as creatures that are hastening to eternity, we ought all to use the means of preparing to appear before God. As Mr. —— troubled himself to bring me a bill of the performance for Wednesday night, I hope it will not be thought too officious if I offer the following to Mr. —— and his family.

"*On Sunday, August 11th,*

AT INGHAM MEETING HOUSE,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF IMMORTAL SOULS,

Beginning at 10 *in the Forenoon and at* 2 *in the Afternoon,*

Divine worship will be performed by Rev. Mr. Pickers, who will expound the Word of God in the Forenoon, and preach in the Afternoon.

"Prayer will also be offered up to Almighty God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, on behalf of poor sinners, who have broken his holy law, and exposed themselves to his wrath for ever; but through the atonement and righteousness of the divine Mediator pardon is communicated to every penitent, seeking soul.

"Praises will be sung to Jehovah at the usual periods.

"To conclude with thanksgivings to that God who seeks the happiness of his creatures by commanding them to keep holy the Sabbath day.

"Free admittance for all who are disposed to attend, and the accommodation of seats till the house is full."

Everything connected with the cause of Christ was interesting to Mrs. Cooke, especially what concerned the church of which she was a member. In 1826 a change of vital importance took place there which cannot properly be passed over.

The pastor of the church at Ingham, Mr. Pickers, held his office nearly sixteen years, and more than ten years after Mr. and Mrs. Cooke joined it. Mr. Pickers was an acceptable preacher, and Mrs. Cooke's diary frequently mentions the pleasure and profit she received from his discourses. But he was severely tried in his family, and had several times been prevented, by the distress of his mind, from fulfilling his duties. Early in 1826 his infirmities became disordered, and he was quite laid aside from his work. For a considerable time casual supplies were obtained in the hope of his recovery. But these supplies were often such as had little talent for the ministry, and they were not always unobjectionable in their sentiments: men of antinomian, or nearly antinomian views, occasionally got possession of the pulpit: their highly seasoned addresses distasted the more judicious and well informed, and as a consequence the congregation diminished, and other mischief was done. Amongst others Mrs. Cooke, though not a fastidious hearer, was sometimes not a little dissatisfied.

So general was the desire for an alteration, that application was made to Stepney College for the services of a student during his vacation; and Mr. Venimore was accordingly sent down toward the end of June. For a day or two after his arrival he was entertained at the mill, and he was always received there with hospitality and kindness. Mrs. Cooke especially gave him a cordial welcome; and, though he was young and inexperienced, and she a saint of mature age and extraordinary advancement, yet she treated him with as much deference and respect as if he had been long established and well known in the ministry of the gospel.

When his vacation expired the incapacity of Mr. Pickers had not ceased, and the church had thought it right to request his resignation. As Mr. Venimore's labours were generally acceptable, a desire was expressed for his return. In this desire Mrs. Cooke cordially joined. On his leaving Ingham she gave him a long and persuasive letter from herself, urging his compliance with the request of the church; and while the matter remained undecided, it was continually the subject of her thoughts and prayers. When, under the advice of his tutors, Mr. Venimore accepted the invitation, she rejoiced unfeignedly; and, on his return, renewed the kindness she had previously shewn him, which she continued to her dying day. The new minister was ordained May 15th, 1827.

A few weeks before the ordination (April 20th) Mr. Cooke's sister, Mrs. Salmon of Hickling, died after a short illness. Mrs. Cooke visited her a day or two before her death, and was thankful to find her very spiritual and happy in her mind.

The following meditation, occasioned perhaps in part by this bereavement, was written at the same time.

"In a world of so much emptiness and disappointment, how great is the mercy of having a hope beyond the grave. I am often saying, 'O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest.' But I would rather pray for grace to bear all the will of God; knowing that he is

> 'Good when he gives; supremely good;
> Nor less when he denies;
> E'en crosses, in his sovereign hand,
> Prove blessings in disguise.'

O thou dear Jesus, whose life here was toil and sorrow, be pleased to look in mercy on thy frail worm, and make me willing to bear tribulation as the way to the kingdom; but let me not make crosses for myself."

Sunday, 27th May, she writes:—

"Meeting in the schoolroom in the evening; I staid at home. Had, part of the evening, a wrestling, striving, weeping in prayer, the rest very serene and comfortable."

In June her daughter made application for baptism. This gave Mrs. Cooke "solid pleasure, and 'caused through her thanksgivings unto God.'"

Of the day of the church meeting at which the application was introduced, she said:—

"So calm and heavenly a day I know not when I have enjoyed."

At the following church meeting, August 7th, Miss Cooke was accepted by the church. It was a high day for her mother, who has recorded the hymn sung, and the principal topics of the confession of faith. She adds:—"I rejoice and praise my gracious God for what he has done for my dear Mary, and wish to give him all the glory."

This last expression implies that she was not unconscious of her own instrumentality in the good work; but would ascribe all to him who had crowned her efforts with success.

When Mr. Cooke hired a farm at Catfield, the attention of Mrs. Cooke was turned to the spiritual necessities of the village; and when the minister of Ingham chapel was set at liberty for one Lord's day evening in a month, she expressed a desire that he should employ the evening by preaching at Catfield.

With a commendable readiness to second her pious desires Mr. Cooke hired a room in the village, and provided it with the necessary furniture.

In 1828 occurred the first instance of a new class of changes in her family—the removal from her roof of one dearly loved, and long and tenderly watched over, to be the head of a separate family. Mr. S. C. Cooke was in that year married to Miss E. Cubitt, of Ingham, and began business at Buxton. He was the son of her "favourite sister," Maria. Left motherless when a few days old, to him was transferred the affection she had felt so warmly for his deceased parent; and, with the exception of a short interval, she had the charge of him from the death of her sister, till she herself accepted an offer of marriage from Mr. Cooke. The motherless boy never knew his loss by any lack of tenderness on the part of his step-mother, or any preference of her own children over him. Many times the recurrence of his birthday is noticed in the diary with the utmost fondness; joy is repeatedly expressed for his success as a student at school, and his steadiness as a young man, accompanied with most fervent prayers for his eternal welfare.

When he went forth, therefore, to battle with the world alone, he was followed with good wishes as warm, and prayers as fervent, as any son could desire; and to the end of her life Mrs. Cooke cherished a mother's interest in all things which concerned him.

The following meditation was written at the beginning of 1829. It is in a plaintive tone; but it will serve to shew how prominent usefulness was in her idea of the Christian character.

"When I think seriously that I am now in my fifty-first year, I think how few more years can I expect to see. And indeed, if really prepared, I am almost willing to leave my earthly tent, to go to Jesus. I feel so unfit, and to so little good, that I fear I am only a cumberer of the ground. My spirits, too, are very low; and I often say, 'O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.' Yet amid all my sorrow, I sometimes hope my dear Saviour is more precious to me, and that I feel my heart in some degree weaned from earth."

Five weeks later she writes:—

"'O for a cabin, a humble home,
Even every moment free!'

But alas! I am so overpowered with worldly care, that, at times, I feel as if I should have a brain fever. Sometimes I am seized with such nervous feelings in the night, that I am full of horror, seem to have lost all hope, and dread the thought of dying. But as soon as the fit is over, I am melted in love to my blessed Lord, that I have still a hope in him."

These symptoms indicated disease; and in the month of September, she had a severe attack of nervous fever, which sometimes affected both her sight and hearing. It remained upon her to the end of the year. The records of it are necessarily scanty, as she was often unable to continue her diary; and of the few entries made, a large portion were written with a pencil, and are many of them illegible. She entered upon this affliction without terror, but with a perfect consciousness of its approach, and of its serious character. One remark indicates a submissive desire of recovery; but

this only on account of her husband and children, to whom she knew her continuance would be an advantage; like the Apostle Paul, who said to the Philippians, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." On January 8th, 1830, she mentions being got out of bed after being confined to it for a month. "At times," she adds, "I am nervous and dejected; at others a little revived and hoping in God." In this illness she was brought so low, that two or three times she was not expected to live through the day.

In February she began to recover, and to use a pen occasionally for the entries in her diary; the handwriting too recovers in some degree its natural clearness. February 7th an entry occurs which shews her thoughtfulness about the poor, and her scrupulous care to hold back nothing from the cause of Christ.

"Ordinance day at Ingham. Very severe winter weather. I sent five shillings to the poor's money; three shillings for the three times I have been absent from the Lord's table, and two shillings on account of the severity of the winter."

On April 25th she was so far recovered as to be able to get to meeting, and from that time appears to have gradually regained her strength.

In the year 1830 several deaths occurred in her family connection, which excited deep and various emotions in her mind.

The first was that of Mr. S. C. Cooke's infant son, who died January 31st. She regarded him as her

grandchild, and as she was at the time only beginning to recover from the illness already mentioned, she felt the stroke severely.

A day or two after she wrote the following letter to her youngest son, who was at school:—

Stalham, February 5th, 1830.

My dear William,

Through the mercy of God I am again permitted to sit up in my chair; and as you wrote me a letter, I have taken a whole sheet of paper to write you one in return. I think you knew, before you left home, that your brother's little boy was taken very ill: he kept getting worse, so that for above a fortnight the doctor had no hopes of his living. On Monday your brother came to let us know that the dear boy had left all his sufferings and sorrows, and was not, for God had taken him. Yes, my dear William, the little sprightly boy whom you loved, and who was so finely when you were at Buxton, is dead, and is this morning buried at Ingham, somewhere near your uncle Robert's tomb. May the Lord impress all our minds with seriousness on the occasion; and teach us so "to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!" I should much have liked my dear William to have been at the funeral; but your father considered the weather so severe that he could not hear of your coming.

* * * * * *

Now my dear William, I hope you will not make yourself unhappy at the loss of dear little Cubitt Cooke. Consider, it might have been your dear mother instead of

him that was buried to-day; how great the mercy for you that he is taken and I left. Recollect, my dear boy, that though he will not be delighted at hearing you sing *Lydia tune* again, he is delighted with the songs of the inhabitants of heaven; and oh, William, prepare to meet him in that holy happy world, where, through the merits of the blessed Saviour, I trust our dear departed little relative now is. Let us then lift up our thoughts from the grave where he is left, and think of the heaven to which his soul is gone. And let us never forget how soon it may come to our turn to follow him to the silent grave; and, as we have the means put in our hands of preparing to meet our God, may we be careful to use them; that is, pray for the teachings of God's Holy Spirit, read his word constantly and attentively, and hear his ministers as though God spoke by them, as he really does. I pray, my dear William, that you, and all my children, may be Christians, and humbly follow the Lord in all his ways. But I must conclude, with kind love from us all.

I am, my dear boy,
Your affectionate mother,
SOPHIA COOKE.

Mr. Cooke's only surviving brother, Henry, died 23rd August. Mrs. Cooke felt the solemnity of the event; though there was nothing unusual in it, as the decline of her relative had been very gradual, and nature was exhausted.

October 3rd she refers to it thus:—

"I felt very poorly when I got to meeting; was melted to tears at my weakness of body, thinking I

might soon be with Mr. E. Cooke in the grave. Felt much at the thought of leaving my dear family; but while the congregation were singing

"Though I walk through the gloomy vale,
Where death and all its terrors are,
My heart and hope shall never fail,
For God my shepherd's with me there."

I felt so happy that I lost my fear of death, and felt as if it were only stepping over the threshold, to go to glory. Death had lost all its terrors, and the grave its horrors, at the idea of being absent from the body, to be present with the Lord."

On Christmas day, Mrs. Whitaker, the only surviving sister of Mr. Cooke, was removed. She was a member of the church at Ingham; a quiet, simple-minded, consistent Christian. She rested from her labours at the age of seventy-seven.

To this list may be added the name of Mrs. Sparkhall, half sister of Mrs. Cooke, who died May 5th, 1831. She also was a member of the church at Ingham; a woman of sincere piety, whom age had for some time weakened in body, and perhaps in mind. She was married before the birth of Mrs. Cooke; and through that long course of years had fulfilled her duties as a wife and the mother of a large family, in an unexceptionable manner. Her sister's sorrow as she followed her to the grave was lightened by the confidence of reunion in happier circumstances beyond the grave.

In the autumn of 1831, the evening service at Catfield, which had been carried on at Mr. Cooke's expense since 1827, was removed to his farm-house in another part of the village. On that occasion Mrs.

Cooke wrote an address to the labourers on the farm, from which the following are extracts:—

"A concern for your everlasting welfare has long dwelt on my mind, and many prayers have I offered up, that you might all be the servants of the living God. What use you have made of the opportunities you have had for several years, you must know best. You are now all these years nearer to that world which will never end.

"A place more in the midst of you is now obtained for the preaching; and I write to say, that Mr. Cooke and I wish you all to attend at the meeting, which is fixed for next Sunday, and will continue every month. You will recollect that the meeting is at a time when you could not be at church; and as the gospel will be preached purposely for your eternal benefit, and that of others who, we trust, will attend with you, we are not without hope that by a regular attendance, you may receive such instructions as shall make you wise unto salvation, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

"Let me then, as one who must meet you in another world, beseech you, 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' If we see or hear that you constantly attend, and get your families and neighbours to attend with you, it will give us pleasure, and, we have reason to conclude, will not be in vain in the Lord.

"I am in hopes I shall be able before long to lend you some tracts, which, with the blessing of God, will

instruct you in the things which relate to your souls and another world, and the Saviour, who died for sinners.

"'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.' Not a few hours only, but the whole of it, morning, noon, and night."

In order more effectually to influence the labourers to attend the preaching room, she who wrote these earnest exhortations was accustomed to attend it herself as often as she could; and, after the service, she would take occasion to express her pleasure at seeing them, and to speak a few words of application and encouragement.

Whether her efforts in this instance produced any good result, must be left to the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open: but if not, she was "unto God a sweet savour of Christ," and her endeavours to bless others have, doubtless, "returned to her again."

CHAPTER X.

ANXIETIES.

MRS. COOKE'S diary, which has been so largely used in the compilation of this Memoir, contains frequent and bitter lamentations on account of her own sinfulness. No one will suspect the sincerity of these lamentations; nor will they seem unaccountable, if we recollect, that every advance in personal religion is accompanied by an acuter sensibility to heart-sin. From this cause our pious relative often condemned herself, at the very time that she was displaying a degree of devotedness to God, far above the ordinary standard.

There was perhaps no irregular emotion to which she was more tempted, than to over anxiety, and gloomy forebodings. These are doubtless contrary to the will of Him who will have his disciples "to be without carefulness;" and they discover something less than full reliance on God's fatherly care, and entire submission to his will. Under these feelings she often groaned, being burdened; and she did not always succeed in repressing them.

Some causes which awakened her anxieties may be worth recording.

Two of her sons were now in the vigour of their youth, and she could no longer control them as she had done in their childhood. They were full of spirits, and like other boys fond of pleasure. When they were absent she was full of anxiety to know where they were, and what they were doing; she fancied a thousand evils which might befall them, and could often get no peace till she saw them safely home.

Their spiritual condition too excited her concern. In December she wrote:—

"Often does my soul yearn over my poor boys, and long for their conversion to God."

April 6th, 1831, her daughter was married to Mr. Venimore, the pastor of the church at Ingham. It was a great alleviation of Mrs. Cooke's regret at the loss of her daughter's society, that she was to live, for a time, very near. Before the birth of Mrs. Venimore's first child, her mother's fears were strongly excited for her safety; especially when a young Christian friend at Stalham was taken away in similar circumstances. These anxieties were exchanged for proportionate thankfulness when the anticipated event had taken place, and as the beloved object of them was restored to health.

Another cause of motherly solicitude presented itself soon after. In 1831 the much dreaded *cholera morbus* was gradually making its way through Europe, and towards England; in February, 1832, it appeared in London, and in August at Norwich. Her youngest son William, was then at school in that city; and the idea of his being in the very neighbourhood of a disease esteemed so fatal and infectious, alarmed her very much.

Many tears of anxiety were shed about him, and earnest prayers for his preservation were continually offered. Each succeeding Saturday night, when some of the family had generally been at market, her first inquiries were about the school-boy; and her gratitude for his safety is recorded in such entries as these:—

"Through mercy dear William is yet in health, praise the Lord!"

At Michaelmas she writes:—

"Through great mercy my dear William was safe in our house once more! O how often have I feared the dreadful cholera, which is in Norwich, should take him off by death. But the Lord has been better to us than my fears."

At Christmas she wrote again:—

"The Lord mercifully preserved our dear child William home to us in safety, though the cholera was in Norwich at one time. O how great is this mercy!"

May the object of so much anxiety, and so many earnest prayers, be welcomed at length, by his glorified mother, to a safer and a happier home!

Another source of concern was the serious illness of Mr. Cooke, about the middle of 1832. A complaint which doubtless hastened his end, had previously made its appearance, and he was now much reduced. He was also affected by an unnatural drowsiness, which indicated some pressure on the brain; and Mrs. Cooke watched him as he sat and slept with the saddest apprehensions.

Under these diversified alarms she was wont to use a couplet of Bunyan's.

"The Christian man is never long at ease,
When one trouble 's gone, another doth him seize."

Her troubles led her to the Lord, and she was often privileged to find him her "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

The pain in the chest and the difficulty of breathing which she was subject to, were very distressing at the beginning of 1833, and at the same time her head-ache returned with new violence.

Amid all these diversities of domestic duty, care, anxiety, and sorrow,—and at the same time of bodily distress and spiritual discipline, she continued as active as ever in visiting the sick, and as constant in attending the means of grace. Thus from February 4th to 6th, 1833, she visited twelve sick persons, and attended the weekly service on the evening of the last named day. February 20th, she says:—

"A wet day, and a dreary evening. I asked —— to go to the evening meeting with me; but she sent word she could not. I felt low, but thought how the Lord had helped me through thus far in the week, and I would not give up: 'Wilt thou forsake me too?' sounded also in my ears: so I had George drive me in the donkey-cart, and we followed Mr. V——. I was well rewarded; I enjoyed the meeting, especially hearing Mr. V—— on 'God is our refuge and strength.'"

In fact, it was from religion only that she either found or expected pleasure and relief. Society and conversation, the common relaxations of those who are wearied with the cares of life, did not gratify her, unless the religious element was largely present; and therefore she never willingly mixed in company with those who had no love for religion.

The year 1834 opened with a bereavement which was keenly felt. On January 3rd, her old and valued friend, Mr. Clarke, long the pastor of the Baptist church at Worstead, died after three hours' illness. He was a friend after her own heart. Cheerful yet eminent for spirituality, he was ever ready for religious exercises, and his conversation was always "with grace seasoned as with salt." In his manner he was playful and even facetious; but his observations always tended to direct the thoughts towards God; and were often made in a pithy sententious form which fixed them on the memory. To the young he was particularly attentive, striving to win their attention to the one thing needful, and recommending his views to them by the quaint liveliness of his illustrations. Mrs. Cooke esteemed him one of her most valuable friends, and often held pleasant communion with him on the things of God. Mr. Clarke's last visit to Stalham mill had been made June 12th, 1833. His friend's diary for that and the following day records that he spent the night there, attending the evening service at Stalham, where he gave a short address.

"He was excellent company," she says, "and enjoyed good health and spirits. He prayed with us once in the day and again in the evening."

Of his death she wrote as follows:—

"It greatly afflicted me and mine. He was a very cheerful, pious man. He came into Norfolk in 1812, and soon became very intimate both with Mr. Cooke and myself; and continued our steady friend to the last. He had several times been confined by illness, but had lately been better than usual: he had often been dejected too; but of late was very happy in his mind."

Mr. and Mrs. Cooke attended the good man's funeral. Mrs. Cooke says:—

"We got there time enough to see the cold remains of our beloved friend. The tongue was silent which had so often instructed us; and the eye which had beamed with benevolence was closed in the slumber of death."

A funeral sermon for the departed minister was preached at Ingham, from "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?"

But heavier sorrows were at hand.

The affliction mentioned above as having attacked Mr. Cooke, had already made serious inroads on his constitution: under January 13th, 1834, the diary says:—

"Mr. Cooke is very poorly—wasted much." Soon after a most unfavourable change took place in his health; his constitution began rapidly to break up; symptoms of mortification appeared in one of his feet; and on the last day of May he died.

A funeral sermon was delivered June 22nd, from a text chosen by Mr. Cooke, and exhibiting his ground of hope for eternity: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." A crowded congregation assembled to hear it; and it was afterwards published at Mrs. Cooke's request.

She was much comforted under the stroke in the recollection that during her husband's illness his confidence in the blood of Christ was strong, and his soul resigned and happy: and she often afterwards repeated the words by which he expressed the steadfastness of his faith, "Happy on the Rock, Christ Jesus." But her sorrow was deep and lasting.

The following is the first entry in the next year's pocket-book:—

"I have to begin the new year as a widow; a trial not easily forgotten; but

> 'It is the Lord; shall I distrust,
> Or contradict his will,
> Who cannot do but what is just,
> And must be righteous still?'"

And as the anniversary of her husband's death drew nearer, she beguiled her sorrows by dwelling sadly and fondly, in her diary, on his last visit to the house of God, his last call on his daughter, and the various steps of the progress of his disease to its fatal termination.

CHAPTER XI.

WIDOWHOOD.

WIDOW is a sad word: the associations which crowd around it are all gloomy. Foremost among these is the idea of bereavement; the rupture of the closest and tenderest of all human ties. But with this, destitution, helplessness, unwonted and overwhelming care, are often united. From these last Mrs. Cooke was happily preserved. As her husband had been in circumstances to make provision for her, this duty was of course not neglected. The settlement of her children in business, too, had been provided for by their father's care; and most of them were of full age. According to the will of Mr. Cooke the business of the mill was to be carried on by his executors, during the minority of his youngest son, and the domestic establishment remained under the management of his widow.

She continued her old habits of activity and carefulness at home, and, so far as she was able, her diligence in visiting, and in attending the means of grace; nor was sorrow ever made an excuse for the neglect of duty. Her solicitude for the spiritual welfare of her children,

too, was unaltered, now that they were become, or becoming, men. The following meditation was written early in 1835. It shews her continued anxiety for the souls of her children; and of others who came within her reach.

"My mind has been much exercised of late, respecting the visits being so carnally conducted. And then, my children go so much into worldly circles, that I fear it should quite damp them for spiritual pursuits. Now I am looking forward to a young party amongst our dissenting friends; and my conscience tells me that the death of my dear husband ought to be a fresh stimulus for me to attend to, and encourage my young friends to attend to, spiritual things. What cause I have to be much in prayer, that I be not left to fall into temptation, and neglect my duty! I long to see and know that my dear family and young friends know and follow the Lord: yet I leave them in their carnal state, without seeking their spiritual life, and drawing them to the Saviour. Dear Lord, hear this one request, and answer it; that I may never neglect my duty to thee, in not seeking the salvation of immortal souls; but warm my heart with heavenly fire, that

'Henceforth my great concern may be
To love and please thee more.'

If I live may I not have to blush for my misconduct at the time I am looking for."

Just after, she wrote:—

"On Wednesday my sons went to spend the evening at quite a carnal party, and I had to go alone to the prayer-meeting. My heart was pained; yet I cannot

alter these things. Only I fear lest I should be at ease, and not strive against them. Surely the Lord knoweth the way that I take; and when he has tried me, may I come forth as gold. My soul was joyful in the Lord during the service; and I compared my lot with those at the party, where I was asked to go, and was thankful that my unworthy feet were turned into the way of peace. O that theirs were!"

Nor did she shrink from direct expostulation and reproof, when she thought it right and prudent to adopt this method; but her zeal in rebuking evil was accompanied with much discretion. The character of her rebukes also was peculiar: they had not the passion, the authoritative tone, or the harshness of scolding; they expressed sorrow more than wrath. Moreover, the unbroken consistency of her character had created such a feeling of veneration in the minds of her children, that they would receive with patience and submission from her, remonstrances which from another would have kindled their resentment.

At the worst she had one never failing resource: her belief in God as the hearer of prayer was real and practical; and before him she poured forth her desires for her children with strong crying and tears. It may be added that she "was heard in that she feared." Her affectionate faithfulness was not unrewarded, nor her prayers unanswered. May those for whom she watched and wept, and prayed, that Christ might be formed within them, all be found at last, with their beloved mother, among the saints in light!

It was very shortly after the death of Mr. Cooke that the communion question was introduced to the church at Ingham. That church had always practised strict

communion; but Mr. Venimore was desirous of admitting all believers to the Lord's table, whatever their sentiments on baptism. Many members of the church however were opposed to the change; and the plan was therefore adopted of administering the Lord's Supper separately to Pædo-baptist communicants and others who would join them. In this way the minister hoped to avoid violating the consciences of his friends while obeying the dictates of his own. Mrs. Cooke's early religious connections were all strict communionists; and her friend and correspondent, Mr. Kinghorn, was the great champion of the exclusive practice. It was therefore no small testimony to her independence, liberality, and freedom from prejudice, that she readily embraced free communion sentiments, and constantly united with the Pædo-baptist friends at Ingham in celebrating the death of Christ.

At Michaelmas, 1835, Mr. Robert Cooke went into business, and was soon afterwards married. This was an occasion full of anxiety for his mother. The eldest of her own sons was launching on the sea of life, to encounter its vicissitudes alone. Her house was no longer to be his home. She would no longer minister to his comfort, nor be able to any great extent to watch over him.

What she could do she did. She addressed him with affectionate and earnest counsels, suitable to the position he was about to assume. She gave him a Bible and a book of prayers, and received from him a promise to use them every night, which relieved her anxieties and gladdened her heart. Finally she resorted to her unfailing refuge, the throne of grace; sending her beloved one

forth into the world, with the most earnest intercessions on his behalf. Her diary for the day contains these words:—

"My dear son Robert was married to-day. God bless the union for their present and eternal happiness! I went in to receive them home; and Robert asked me to pray before I left them, which I was glad of. I gave them a Bible and a prayer-book, which Robert intends using every night; and I pray that he may soon lay it aside and pray without it."

At the close of the same year a congregational library was opened at Ingham chapel. Mrs. Cooke, who was ready to every good work, had assisted in its establishment by donations, both of books and money. She was to the end of her life one of its subscribers, and viewed with great satisfaction its popularity and success.

In the former part of 1837, Mrs. Cooke had an alarming attack of the disorder in her chest, and was confined to her chamber for some weeks. Her illness was so violent, that she could make only few and slight memorandums of it. This affliction appears to have begun about the middle of January. On March 15th she was better, but still unwell, and afraid to venture to the evening service. She attended the Annual Missionary Meeting, April 18th, and on May 1st resumed her accustomed course.

In the last week of March, 1838, she mentions several visits which she made, on four successive days, to the sick poor and others. The four made on Wednesday were to poor people exclusively, and afterwards she attended the evening service. Referring to those visits, she says:—

"Found Wednesday the most spiritual; am often most so amongst the poor."

This was not wonderful. When she could give to her visits the character of her own mind they were sure to be 'spiritual;' and the poor would generally be influenced by deference to a person in a higher rank to give her the lead in conversation. Among the rich she was induced to take a less prominent part; and so she often found herself involved in conversation less profitable than accorded with her own desires.

December 20th, Mrs. Cooke was again considerably indisposed. On the 26th she says:—

"This morning I felt much worse; my disorder, dropsy in the chest, increased alarmingly; Mr. Clowes considered me in great danger. But I felt no alarm; and though my son was out, was not agitated. The doctor has ordered that no one should see me, and that no message should be carried to me."

At this time she was considered near death. But at the beginning of the new year she speaks of herself as recovering, and adds: "O that I could feel more love and zeal for Christ!"

The next summer her disorder returned upon her, and she seems to have been conscious of some impatience; praying earnestly for more submission to the will of God under her trials.

On February 10th, 1840, her second son was married, and commenced business at Catfield, in the farm which had been long in the occupation of the family. She took a warm interest in this event, as she did in every thing which concerned her children; and her son

entered on his new situation with her most earnest prayers for his welfare in time and eternity. But the occurrence made her very busy for the time, so that she could make no long entries in her diary.

In the following year her health was again much disturbed. Sunday, May 16th, is noticed as the first Sunday evening she had been out during the year. Those who know how resolutely she persisted in attending public worship, often when it might have been prudent to stay at home, will see in this a proof that her illness for many months was serious. June 14th and 15th she was again taking medicine, which she never did without absolute necessity. Yet on the 16th we find her at her usual work ministering comfort and instruction to many of her sick neighbours.

These repeated attacks of illness, and the steady increase of her infirmities, alarmed her family; and as no likeness of her existed, one of them, anxious to possess a permanent memorial of a countenance so venerated, and associated with so much excellence, obtained her consent to sit for her portrait. An artist was sent from Norwich to execute it. It was considered a faithful likeness of her as she appeared at that time, when she was in her sixty-third year, and is very precious to its possessor; especially now, that the original countenance is mouldering in the grave. But she was destined to live more than fourteen years after it was taken, to experience many more and severer afflictions, and to exhibit many more traces of age and decrepitude, before she was called away. The feeling that it was death only that would

put its full value on her picture, greatly impressed her mind. She says:—

"I have been much solemnized this week, in sitting for my likeness, thinking of my mortality; had a comfortable hope of heaven."

About the same time she entirely renounced the use of alcoholic drinks, and resolved not to offer them to her friends. The subject of total abstinence had been introduced to the public by a series of meetings; and some of these Mrs. Cooke was induced to attend. The practice was recommended to her as the direct opposite of drunkenness, which she regarded as one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of religion; and it was warmly espoused by a friend whose pious and amiable character had won her affection, and whose judgment she highly esteemed. After a short time, therefore, she thought it right to embrace "teetotalism" without reserve.

This will be seen from the following letter to her pastor and son-in-law:—

Friday, April 3rd, 1841.

My dear Sir,

Although I have time to say only a few words, I wish out of the respect I owe you as my pastor, to say, that I should be sorry to appear wrong in your eyes in the view which I take respecting total abstinence. I assure you, I am influenced by no party spirit, but by the view I take of the evil that is in the world through the sin of intoxication. As I often wish I could do more for the heathen abroad, so I do for those at home; and the more I think and read, see and hear,

of the growth of intemperance, the more do I wish to set my face against it, by abstaining, myself, from intoxicating drink, and not offering it to any one; leaving myself in the hands of the Lord to secure me the continued love of my beloved family, and respect of my beloved pastor. I feel a wish by all means that neither you, dear Sir, nor any other of God's ministers or people, may think I set myself up to judge the conduct of those who see not as I now see; nor do I feel it right to countenance the harsh or rude conduct of some who plead the cause of teetotalism to its injury; yet feeling the sin of Britain's idolatry needs to be suppressed, I cannot feel easy in my mind any longer without acting up to my convictions, though I fear some of my very greatly beloved family may be grieved at it. May the Lord pardon me if I err; I trust I have made it a matter of earnest wrestling at the throne of grace, that I may not do evil that good may come; and that I may be willing to take up the cross. I own, that to have my family differ from me, and to break through old customs, is no small cross for me to take up. I never knew, in all my profession of Christianity, any thing that cost my feelings so much as a wish to live up to my present convictions. I trust, dear Sir, you will pardon this hasty scrawl, and not think the less of me as a professor of Christianity, as a member of your church, or one so nearly allied to the partner of your life. Were it not that I hope the love of Christ, and love to souls, are my ruling principles, I should think I might be counted a troubler of Israel; but I hope I am not deluded when I say, these are my ruling motives, though I once did not see as I now do; nor do I

condemn any who still differ from me; but I trust that all who love Christ will be acting on their different views more than ever, so as to hasten the fulfilment of the petition "Thy kingdom come."

Begging your continued respect and Christian regard, I am, dear Sir, your unworthy though sincere friend, and part of your charge,

S. Cooke.

But in this respect her family did not generally partake her opinions; and she was much distressed at the idea of placing herself in opposition to them; so that their first visit to her, after the change, was anticipated with much nervousness and misgiving. With these impressions she wrote to her friend, to beg an interest in her prayers that she might stand steadfast. Under similar alarms with regard to other friends, she wrote in her diary:—

"May the Lord keep me in the hour of temptation! I suppose we shall have our former friends forsake us; but it will be best in the end, that our visits may be more select and spiritual. If our serious friends who are not teetotalers will join us still, I must still hope in God; he has been my refuge and support till now."

It is seldom, however, that the penalty we have to pay for obeying conscience equals our apprehensions; and Mrs. Cooke probably felt herself encouraged in acting upon her own views, by the comparative lightness of the cross she had so much feared. Indeed, she must have greatly over-estimated the degree of her friends' antipathy to total abstinence, or else have supposed them strangely insensible to her manifold excellencies; other-

wise she would not have looked for that great difference in their behaviour, which had so alarmed her imagination. Of her own family she wrote, after the dreaded visit was over:—

"I desire to adore the kindness of my heavenly father, that I got through so well. They none of them named the subject to me, nor did they ask for any drink of an intoxicating nature. There was as little difference in —— and —— as possible; —— seemed distressed, but not unkind; —— and —— behaved most kindly to me about it."

Her other friends also did not forsake her on account of her new practice; they were still willing to accept her hospitalities; and were as glad as ever to welcome her to their own friendly circles, and to receive with deference the lessons of her eminent piety and rich experience.

August 25th, 1841, is marked in the diary as the day on which Mrs. Elizabeth Snelling departed this life. She was a friend of Mrs. Cooke's youth; a member of the family of that name mentioned in the narrative, amongst those in whose friendship Miss Cubitt rejoiced when her worldly friends forsook her in 1795; and it was to this lady she addressed the letter given in Chapter III, and dated October 3rd, 1799. Mrs. Cooke kept up an affectionate intercourse with her till the time of her death, and was expecting a visit from her when she heard of her removal to a better world.

In the autumn of this year her son Robert was attacked with a dangerous illness, which roused her maternal sympathies and Christian anxieties. She feared he might die, and she was not sure that he was

ready for the great change. Had he been a stranger she could not, in such a case, have been without concern; nor would she have failed to use any means within her reach to communicate to him the tidings of salvation. But it was her son whose soul might be in danger; and without much difficulty she could reach his bedside. There accordingly she was soon found; and as often as her own opportunities, and the health of the sufferer allowed, thither she returned to renew her ministrations, to bathe his forehead, to moisten his lips, to support his head; and at intervals to question, to counsel, to encourage, or to pray, as the occasion required. We may be certain she lost no time in generalities, she never did; her power of getting close to the conscience was remarkable. The full details of these interviews between the mother and the son we cannot yet know, but they are registered in heaven.

Towards the end of this eventful affliction, her son-in-law, the pastor of the church at Ingham, called to hear of the condition of his relative. Just then she came down from the chamber, as from the very presence of God. She expressed her full conviction that the Holy Spirit was leading her son into the way of peace; and, as she made the declaration, a strange awe mingled with her joy, as if she felt that the place where she had been standing was holy ground.

After three weeks' illness the sufferer slowly recovered. October 16th his mother writes:—

"Dear Robert mends fast, and, I hope, is still seeking Christ."

To the glory of divine grace it should be added, that the benefits of affliction remained after its removal; and

the Christian mother henceforward rejoiced over her son as a fellow-heir of the grace of life.

In the month of November the following year, a melancholy event took place in the family of Mr. John Cubitt. His son Edward was under the care of his eldest brother, who was captain of a merchant vessel in the East India trade. The youth fell off the deck of a ship in the port of Glasgow, and was drowned. His aunt Cooke says in her diary:—

"I wept much: and feel deeply for my poor brother and his family. May the Lord appear for them; and may all be well with the dear lad, who I hope was pious, and was a very promising youth for his years."

During this year there seems to have been no very serious interruption of her accustomed health: but she was now habitually the subject of much bodily weakness, pain, and difficulty of breathing. Yet she still continued her habits of charitable visiting; and the entries in her diary, now comparatively short and few, often consist only of a catalogue of the visits paid during the day.

The suffering these visits cost her is evident from the following letter to her daughter, dated

December 26th, 1842.

My dear Mary,

Having an evening alone and a little cessation from writing, I feel a desire to write a few lines to you, to assure you, that although I have not called on you lately or been at home when you have called, it has not been from disrespect or neglect; I hope, unworthy as I am to say so, I've been "about my Father's business;" yes, dear Mary, I felt the force of Mr. V——'s

observation on Sunday morning as to the benefit of activity for God, and am ready to lament that, as he justly observed of the aged members of Christ's church, I feel I am almost past labour; could you have seen me after I returned from two or three days' visiting from house to house, you'd have said, "you do more than you are able," as I have been so exhausted, I have been almost ready to faint when I have reached the sofa. I don't name it as if I had done anything meritorious, or even worth notice, but just to assure you I have been in some degree leaving children whom I love to visit, to go on the Lord's errands, whilst I have felt somewhat a struggle between natural affection and spiritual duty to do it. I should not have named it but as an apology to you, and a testimony to the truth of Mr. V——'s observations yesterday morning in a sermon; I hope I felt it much, but lament my unprofitableness; still, for Mr. V——'s encouragement, I wish to notice that I trust, even down to old age, I feel his sermons are profitable to me in urging me to seek after precious souls; for though I can do so very little, yet I think it makes me do a little. O, dear Mary, I often think of you; I feel I have lost your help many years, but I hope my dear grand-daughters will in due time become tract distributors; I can't *now*, or else I think I have more heart for it than when younger. I think if I could walk, and had only to step into the houses, how easily it could be done; but now getting up and down into the gig hurt my poor chest, so that I am forced to content myself with lending to our work folks and a few neighbours, and giving away as opportunity offers. But, dear Mary, I shall tire you with egotism, but you'll forgive your

aged mother whilst she goes on to say how happy she has been this last fortnight during her visits to the afflicted, the "widow, and those who have no helper."

I long to see you more liberated, so that you could attend public worship more frequently, and meet us at the committee meetings and female prayer meetings which you have been hindered from some time: but I trust you have found your dear Saviour's presence in the path of duty at home; and you have much work for God in the care of those precious souls whose bodies are so dear to you; may you be much blest in your labours amongst your beloved family. I was much pleased with a new tract I had lately sent me, among the new ones I have once a year from London; if I think of it I will send it you, as it may be useful in your important work.

I am truly glad you are expecting a pious teacher to help you in your spiritual duties amongst your dear children. I seem to count of having two pious females added to our family circle, as I trust we shall reap the benefit of their prayers and pious walk. Young Christians are often a help, and I hope we shall find them so in our churches at Ingham and Buxton. O, dear Mary, how I long to have Mr. V——'s prayers answered and exhortations attended to, by his people "not forsaking the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is." I am glad the juvenile meeting is resumed amongst the young men; it is equally wanted amongst the females, but I fear they would not dare to get out alone; could not the old plan of district meetings be revived? will you think of it, and name it to Mr. V—— that a trial be made; as it might help the aged and quicken the young.

Ere I close I would just say, I hope you and Mr. V—— will allow Mary and Sophia to attend on Friday evening at the juvenile teachers' meeting, as I shall wish to treat them with their tea at the first teachers' tea party they will have attended. I trust it may be a profitable meeting, and it is pleasant to think we have a circle of young persons who wish to meet in such a way.

O let us cherish everything likely to do good, and not be like the disciples who said, "I forbade him because he followeth not with us."

* * * * * *

I now, dear Mary, conclude with kind love, and am

Your affectionate mother,

S. Cooke.

The year 1843 begins with a short meditation:—

"Through mercy spared to begin a new year; but death may be near at hand. O that I may be found in Jesus, having on the wedding garment, that I may be permitted to enter into the joy of the Lord."

This year she was seriously and repeatedly ill. In June she laments "a dull and dreary Sabbath at home." In September she was again ill; and kept her bed several days. She recovered from these attacks; but they left her under the pressure of increased infirmity. These repeated afflictions made her think that death was near. Under this impression she wrote the following note to her daughter.

My dear Mary,

As the doctor thinks I am not so well as yesterday, I just scrawl this to say, my hope is firmly fixed on the Saviour: I cast myself as a poor lost sinner at the foot of his cross, and if I perish, it will be there; and you know none ever did perish there. Through mercy I feel calm; I hope I have been the Lord's waiting servant some years; and as I become unable to do anything among the sick without suffering after it, I think I shall only be taken from the evil to come. On Lord's days what I feel from the exertion of getting out no one can conceive. Last Sunday, as I got hold of the pews to help myself along, I repeated in silence dear Rowland Hill's soliloquy:—

"And when I'm to die,
Receive me I'll cry,
For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell why;
But this I can find
We two are so joined,
He'll not be in glory and leave me behind."

These words are still a comfort to me; but I have a more sure word, the word of Jesus, "I will come again and receive you unto myself."

Your ever affectionate mother,

S. Cooke.

At the same time she wrote a paper containing directions for her funeral, the particulars of which will appear in the account of it: and adds:—

"O that, when these things are attended to, I may be with my Saviour, as I trust I shall; then to die will be gain.

"And now, my dear children, I commit you all to the care of my heavenly Father, who has provided for me to the present, and has, through grace, given me a hope of eternal happiness, through Christ, when I die. I pray that you may all devote your souls, your all, to him; and seek with earnestness and sincerity the salvation of your souls, and the glory of God; that when you follow me to the eternal world, we may meet to part no more.

"Your dying and affectionate mother,

SOPHIA COOKE."

In December her brother-in-law, Mr. Sparkhall, was removed to a better world. She wept for one so long connected with her family, and so decided a Christian. He was, nominally, a deacon of the church at Ingham; but after he became a widower, resided with his daughters, and so was too far from Ingham to worship with his friends there. But he paid them occasional visits, and was always received with respect and pleasure on account of his intelligence and information, his cheerful manners, and his decided piety. He lived to his ninetieth year, and died very happy and strong in faith. Mrs. Cooke attended his funeral, at Neatishead chapel, December 19th.

In September, 1844, the mother of her son-in-law died at an advanced age. Twelve years before, Mrs. Cooke had shewn her hospitality, and had held communion with her on divine things. This was enough to

give the survivor a friendly interest in her, which was freely expressed on the occasion of her death. It directed her thoughts to her own dissolution too. A family of her grand-children were going into mourning for one who stood in the same relation to them as herself; and she observes,

"The other grand-mama for whom they will have to wear mourning is myself. May I be fit and willing whenever the summons come; and may this providence solemnize me anew."

Such thoughts were in harmony with her bodily condition, which was still one of debility and distress, diversified by occasional attacks of severe illness. Sometimes her afflictions hindered her spiritual enjoyments; at others, the light of God's countenance enabled her almost to forget her pains. Thus, January 3rd, she writes:—

"Prayer meeting at Stalham. I went; through mercy I enjoy my opportunities, though often fatiguing to the body."

On the other hand, she says on the 30th of the same month:—

"I feel my head bad; and I am very nervous, and have swelled and pained legs; so that I can enjoy nothing."

It was time for her to seek repose. Hitherto she had remained at the mill, as mistress of the family; and business matters likewise were often and unavoidably thrust upon her attention. Her youngest son was now proprietor of the establishment; and he alone, of all her children, was unmarried. But he also was expecting

soon to marry, and so to release his mother from her post. She had filled it well; but its duties were now beyond her strength.

Meantime a gracious providence had prepared her an asylum. Mrs. Cubitt, a family connexion and an intimate friend, had been living, a widow, in a comfortable house at the other end of the village. She had long been the subject of weakness and disease; and on December 17th, 1843, she died. Mrs. Cooke felt the loss severely; and she refers to it in her diary with expressions of deep regret.

At that time she had not the most distant expectation of occupying the house thus vacated: but when, a few months after, there appeared a probability of her release from her duties at the mill, the closed dwelling of her friend suggested itself as a suitable retreat, and connected as the families were, there was little difficulty in obtaining it. The arrangement was most agreeable to Mrs. Cooke. She had a firm faith in the overruling providence of God: and considering how soon after the house was at liberty, it was required by, and was engaged for herself, she gratefully calls it in her diary "Providence House."

But the haven of rest, though near, was not yet entered; and the *bar* which was to be crossed in reaching it was trying and somewhat dangerous to the shattered bark. Her own house had to made ready to receive her; and this alone involved an amount of care and anxiety which she could ill bear. At the same time the mill house was to be prepared for the reception of its new mistress; and the bustle of the workmen was

distressing to her head, while the additional labour consequent upon their presence was more than sufficient for her hands. All that kindness and affection could do to relieve her, however, was done; and she was mercifully carried through without material injury.

On February 18th, 1845, her son was married, and she removed to the shelter of her quiet home.

CHAPTER XII.

RETIREMENT.

In collecting the memoirs of one whose life has been chiefly divided between the domestic establishment and the sick chamber, there is a difficulty which the life of a more public individual would not present. The latter acts chiefly on a theatre which is open to the notice of mankind. The most interesting passages of his life therefore are connected with events of public notoriety; and the chief business of his biographer is to shew the principles on which he proceeded on great occasions, and the manner in which they were carried out. For this purpose the materials lie round about him, and in the greatest number where they are wanted most. But the history of one who had little to do with public events—of a private person and a female —must be gathered from other sources; chiefly from her own memorandums, or those of her intimate friends. In the case of Mrs. Cooke we are nearly confined to the former of these; and they were, of course, least copious when she was most engaged. It would be

gratifying, and probably instructive to trace the exercises of her mind, on a change in her mode of life, the greatest which had occurred since her marriage. The last of her children had now settled in life. He had not indeed absolutely done with her: he could still go to her for counsel and for consolation. But she was no longer to minister to his hourly wants: and, in a great measure, her work was done. She had begun to bid the earth farewell; and was drawing perceptibly nearer to her heavenly rest. For eight and forty years she had looked forward to it with desire and hope; striving, sometimes successfully, to catch a ray of the glory which was to be revealed.

"Jerusalem, my happy home, name ever dear to me,
When shall my labours have an end, in joy, and peace, and thee?
When shall these eyes thy heaven-built walls, and pearly gates behold,
Thy bulwarks with salvation strong, and streets of shining gold?
O when, thou city of my God, shall I thy courts ascend,
Where congregations ne'er break up, and sabbaths have no end?
There happier bowers than Eden's bloom, nor sin nor sorrow know:
Blest seats, through rude and stormy scenes, I onward press to you!"

And now the "rude and stormy scenes" were beginning to be left behind. The waters were smoother, for she was getting under the shelter of the heavenly hills: the shores of the land of Canaan were dimly visible on either hand; she was entering the mouth of the river of life, and was no longer to struggle as she had done amid the billows of worldly care.

How these considerations affected her we cannot tell. She had many little matters to arrange after entering on

her new residence: these for some time taxed her enfeebled powers to the utmost; and consequently, for the first seven months of 1845, the pages of her diary are an absolute blank.

There were many things which contributed to make her new home pleasant. She was in the same village and surrounded by the same friends as before; two of her children resided there, and she was within a short distance from another; so that when pretty well, she could visit them without much inconvenience: they also could often visit her; and great was their pleasure in doing any thing for her which was not within the compass of her own means. The slight distance of her house from the road was an advantage; as the noise of carriages was somewhat the less; at the same time she was not shut out from the sight of passing objects; and could often exchange with her children, as they went by, a nod of recognition or a few words of salutation or inquiry. She loved flowers; and she had a garden, large enough for her, in which she could walk when her health permitted, and enjoy them. And lastly, she was no farther than before from the house of God. This was a great thing to her; for she could say, with a degree of feeling which is not common, "My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. A day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Though withdrawn from business, Mrs. Cooke was still ready for every call of duty, "to her power, yea, and beyond her power." In September, 1845, an old servant

of the family, who lived about three miles off, was taken violently ill with an inflammatory disease. Mrs. Cooke was deeply concerned, and drove herself to his house, that she might speak and pray with him. But he pleaded his extreme illness as a reason for not seeing her, and she returned home, in great distress of mind, lest he should be about to pass into eternity unprepared.

After hearing of his death, she wrote thus:—

"Poor man, he has been heaping up treasure, and, I fear has taken no thought about his soul. I have often talked to him, when he was well, but never could produce any effect upon his feelings. On Wednesday he was called away to receive the final sentence. I heard that he got on his knees several times and prayed; I wish it may have been like the publican. I have felt his death very much, having known him so long; forty-six years he worked in our family; and now I fear lest he should not have died in the Lord. I could not enjoy anything to-day." (Sunday, September 21st.)

A few weeks after, one of her daughters-in-law, Mrs. Robert Cooke, was placed in temporary danger by a mistake in the medicine administered to her. Mrs. Cooke was sent for; and on that occasion the sufferer opened her mind on the subject of religion in such a way as to mingle joy with her relative's anxieties. She was thus called to the employment which, next to communion with God, was most pleasant to her, that of addressing to a willing ear encouragements to trust in God and be devoted to his service.

Mrs. Cooke could now look on her son and his wife as being, both of them, disciples of Jesus Christ; and with regard to them, her highest wishes were fulfilled. She

knew they were not "already perfect;" but the Holy Spirit had "begun a good work" in them, and she trusted the promise that he would "perform" or finish it: there was the life of religion in their souls, and she felt assured that, in due time, there would be growth,—growth in knowledge, in faith, in experience, and in courage. She expected to see them soon taking their places among the acknowledged disciples of the Redeemer, cheerfully submitting to his ordinances, and aiding his cause with all the influence of their characters and position. There was one obstacle to the full accomplishment of her desires, namely, that their minds were not made up on the subject of baptism. During the period of their indecision, Dr. Halley's Congregational Lectures on the Sacraments, came into their hands, and the perusal of that work increased their reluctance to commit themselves to the practice of the church to which their mother belonged, and whose worship they also were in the habit of attending. The state of their minds was made known to Mrs. Cooke; and having read the book of Dr. Halley, she wrote the following letter to her son, which admirably shows the catholicity of her feelings, and her superiority to sectarian prejudices.

My dear Robert,

Often is my soul gladdened by the hope that you are now the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ; and from my heart did I unite with Mr. Venimore and Mr. Browne in their addresses to you in the chair at the Stalham Bible Meeting; and glad shall I be to see you advancing in your profession of religion; I mean by following the Lord in all his appointed ways, especially

in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. I would not urge you to a duty because it is in accordance with my views: but I would say follow the dictates of your conscience; take the word of God, and search prayerfully and attentively to know his will on the subject. And if you are at all influenced by Dr. Halley's Lectures on Baptism, I would say, with the kindest and most Christian regard, when you have seen some answers or remarks by the Baptists on the subject, and also given Pengilly on Baptism a very attentive reading, if you then remain a Pedobaptist, make free and state to Mr. Venimore that you see it your duty to attend to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, in compliance with his command, "do this in remembrance of me," but that you cannot see baptism in the light he does; that you think sprinkling a sufficient compliance with Christ's command, and that (if you approve of the advice I am now about to give) you think of going to Mr. Browne, of North Walsham, to be baptised by him and join his church, and then become a communicant with the Independents and other friends who partake of the Lord's Supper in the school-room at Ingham. Or if you think believers' baptism by immersion, but not in public, the most scriptural, I would then advise you to request Mr. V. to do as he did in Mrs. Postle's case; and then if you wish to join the Church at Ingham you can, I judge, be proposed for church fellowship, relate your experience, and be, I doubt not, accepted, and your dear wife the same, whichever are her views on the subject. I would say, "and now why tarriest thou, arise and be baptised," by some way or other, most agreeable to the views you both take of the subject. You know I am what is called a Particular

Baptist, but I hope I can say,

"The good I love of every name,
And pray for all mankind."

I am sure it will cause great joy to my soul to live to see you and dear Mrs. Cooke going on from step to step in the ways of God, and I think that joining yourselves with God's people is a great means of promoting it. And though I think joining the church at Ingham would be most gratifying to Mr. V—— and useful to the cause under his care, yet it would, I doubt not, give him as well as myself great pleasure to see you acting up to your convictions, and going onward in the paths of holiness and happiness.

I have been led to address this letter to you, my dear Robert, from the idea that Dr. Halley's views are in some measure yours, and whilst his book has not shaken me in my views of baptism, I think it has increased my desire that all who see sprinkling or pouring to be right (provided they do not make it regeneration) should act up to their principles, and whatever they do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. I desire that you, dear Robert, and your dear wife, may act thus, and that speedily, or after proper investigation of the subject. I remain, with kind love to yourself and dear Mrs. C——.

Yours affectionately,

SOPHIA COOKE.

From a subsequent page it will be seen that this wise and Christian letter was not without effect. After some further delay, Mrs. Cooke had the satisfaction to find her children's views in accordance with her own, and to witness their immersion as open followers of Christ.

In 1847 Mrs. Cooke suffered much from illness. The following observations were made at the beginning of the year:—

"'The rising morning can't assure
That we shall end the day!'

No more can my entrance on the new year assure me that I shall live to its close. My thoughts have lately been much on the subject of my own death. I feel a gradual decay; my breathing is worse than it has been for a long time.

'I cast my soul on Jesus,
The sin-atoning Lamb.'

'Other refuge have I none!'"

March 11th she notices a call from her daughter; adding:—

"She is very kind and dutiful to her poor aged mother; and so are my sons and daughters-in-law too."

A notice such as this, written in her private memorandums, for no eye but her own, must be infinitely pleasing to the parties concerned, now that she no longer needs, or can receive their attentions. A cup of cold water, given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward; and the children of this venerable servant of Christ may be assured, that her divine Master approved their assiduity, and will own it at the great day. Yet the consciousness of having, by their kind attentions, warmed their mother's heart in her old age, is itself a rich recompense for their zeal.

Her most fervent desire for all her children was, that they should serve the Lord; and she had reason to hope, for more than one of them, that they were on his side. With great pleasure she now also noticed manifestations

of piety in one of her grand-children. July 1st, she says:—

"Dear Mary spoke a little freely with me on the state of her mind. She is under some thought about spiritual things; may she be led on."

These conversations were often renewed afterwards; the grand-child could converse unreservedly with her venerable relative, and was glad to have a counsellor at once so competent and so kind; and the grand-mother could have no greater joy than to train one of her own offspring for the skies. A very warm affection subsisted between the two. The young disciple grew in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. About eighteen months from the date of this first recorded conversation, when she was indulging the hope of being soon admitted to the fellowship of the saints on earth, it pleased God to call her to join the assembly in the skies; while her beloved grand-mother remained to groan under the burden of the flesh for nearly seven more years, before they could renew their communion in the world above.

July 17th Mrs. Cooke's sister, Mrs. Hastings, of Mundesley, died. She was one of the three sisters baptized together at Worstead; and it was of her experience her sister wrote:—

"Charlotte spoke nicely."

There are some now living (1857) who remember it, and who describe it as astonishing for its fulness and clearness. She was very fond of reading, of retired habits, meek and quiet in her deportment, and much depressed in spirit, as if broken down by the cares and burdens of a large family. She was buried in the grave-yard of the mission chapel at Mundesley, and her sister

had the satisfaction of attending the funeral. Her death was improved by Mr. Steel, then the minister of the chapel, in a discourse the text of which was selected by herself. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you."

On November 10th, Mrs. Cooke completed her sixty-ninth year. On that occasion she wrote:—

"How many mercies have I to be thankful for; how many sins to lament? May fresh grace be granted me for the few days or years that remain for me to live."

Soon after she was invited to meet the various members of her family at a friend's. Her health was just then better than usual; but she thought it right to decline the invitation; saying:—

"I do not like these visits, there is so little of Christ in them."

On December 23rd, her son Robert was again taken ill. His disorder was of an inflammatory kind, and for many days, his life was in great danger. His mother entertained a hope that his heart was already right with God; but she was filled with anxiety for his life, and earnestly desired that if spared he might become more devoted to Christ, and take a bolder stand as his disciple. She hastened, therefore, to comply with his wish, that she would be with him as much as possible. She devoted to him one entire Sabbath. To many, even among professors, this sacrifice would have been a small one; but in her estimation Sabbaths were precious days. She fed through the week on the spiritual food they afforded her; and when she was well enough to get out, she always looked forward to the Lord's day with holy desire and expectation. To lose a Sabbath, therefore,

was to her a great thing; and the Sunday after that which she spent at the bedside of her son is noticed with great satisfaction in her diary:—

"I went out *for all day*."

But her attendance on her son was not an unwilling service. She cheerfully exerted all her strength; and repeatedly expressed her thankfulness that her bodily vigour was sustained in an unusual degree. With lively gratitude she also mentions the devoutness of his mind, and his love for spiritual exercises. After about three weeks he began to recover; and on January 16th, 1848, she refers with overflowing gratitude to his re-appearance at the house of God.

Her health must have been at this time better than usual; for one of her daughters-in-law was taken ill soon after, and her also she attended with much assiduity. But during the following March she was so unwell as to be several times prevented from getting to chapel.

May 29th she says:—

"I visited a sick woman who was very ill; she bears a bad character, though a married woman. I felt much about her state, and could not but think it my duty to go; went on Saturday first, but she was not well enough to see me; on Monday I talked faithfully to her, I hope; she asked me to pray, and owned how sinfully she had lived; she hopes, if spared, to live a different life; I wish she may; was very thankful I went."

"June 4th, (Sunday,) a better day in spirituals than some. O to live above the world."

The 9th was to her a day of unusual delight and gratitude. On that day her eldest son called on her and said that he and his wife had been long uncomfortable,

that they had kept back from the ordinances of Christ; and they had now come to the resolution to be baptized. She says:—

"I was delighted; I prayed with him a few minutes, and felt great peace all the evening."

On the following day her son and his wife were proposed for church fellowship; and having been previously baptized, they were received into the church on Sunday, August 6th, and she united with them in the participation of the Lord's Supper.

About the same time another of the family, the first fruit from the next generation, was baptized on a profession of faith; and thereby put a new song of praise into the mouth of her grandmamma, who had no greater joy than to see her children walking in the truth.

In July her youngest son prevailed on her to keep his house for a short time during the absence of his wife and family. While there she was very unwell. Her visit, she says, made her long for and love her own home; but adds:—

"I was really ill all the time I was out; and before I returned to my own house, I longed to be at my last, best, and heavenly home, if the Lord Jesus would reveal himself to me as my portion, my eternal all. Feeling rather better now, I seem through grace to enjoy more spiritual consolation."

In tracing Mrs. Cooke's history we find that spiritual depression was the frequent accompaniment of bodily weakness. Her mind, when she was ill, often became confused; a cloud seemed to spread over those great truths which at other times gave peace to her soul; and so she walked for a time in darkness and sorrow;

then the return of better health would restore to her the joy of God's salvation, and fill her mouth with praise.

In October she was much gratified by an act of kindness on the part of a member of her family, which she thus acknowledges:—

"Dear Samuel made me a very handsome and very unexpected present of a Bath chair, with head, for me to be dragged out, as I am so lame. Praise God for this and all mercies! I felt astonished at dear Samuel's bounty and kindness to me; and thought of the dear boy I loved so when a child, and how kindly he rewards me for all my love and care of him then."

Thus sources of pleasure, and calls to gratitude were not wanting; but they were mingled with many griefs, some of them very poignant and heart-rending. January 21st was rendered mournful by the death of Mr. Howes, the father of one of her daughters-in-law, and many years a colleague of her husband in the office of deacon in the church at Ingham. Of this bereavement she wrote:—

"The death of Mr. Howes affects me much, as it tells me my old friends are dropping off, and I know not how soon I may follow. Yet I desire to leave this world when the Lord has nothing for me to do, or I get burdensome to my family and friends by growing infirmities. I have many calls to work yet if the Lord help me—many letters to write, many afflicted to visit, much counsel to give my beloved children, many prayers to offer up for them and their offspring, and to aid the cause of God in general by my mites. Yet when the Lord has no further need of such a worthless worm, I hope he will release me."

Another bereavement she notices in the following manner:—

"On October 10th, my old friend, Mr. Henry Culley, died very suddenly in a friend's house at Norwich. He was in his eighty-second or eighty-third year, and I trust a good Christian: so that for him 'to die is gain.' For five years he was the very affectionate husband of my dearest sister Mary, who was about his own age. He has lived fifty-two years longer than she, and married twice after her death."

But these losses were light compared with one which shed a terrible gloom over the closing year. Four years before, her youngest son had entered into the married state, and the lady thus introduced into the family had, by her many amiable qualities, been continually growing in the esteem of all its members. On December 19th, 1846, she was confined with her third child. She remained in a very weak and precarious state till the 28th of the same month, when she died.

All the family mourned this event with unaffected sorrow: but excepting her widowed son, probably none felt the loss so acutely as Mrs. Cooke. The deceased had done honour to her husband's choice, and had made his home a very happy one. But besides this, the dutiful affection she had shown to her mother-in-law, the liveliness of her manners, the gentleness and cheerfulness of her spirit, the interest she had shown in religion, and the earnest desire she manifested to be led into the way of peace, had won the warm affections of her new mother; and her removal, after so brief a period, at the early age of thirty, was a deep and heart-felt affliction.

This bereavement was closely followed by another, not

less affecting for its suddenness, and for the youth, the amiableness, and the opening piety of her who was snatched away. Mrs. Cooke's grand-daughter, Mary Cooke Venimore, died less than three weeks after her aunt, and before she had completed her seventeenth year. She was spending her Christmas holidays with her parents when her aunt died: immediately after she herself became unwell; and as it was not deemed prudent for her to be exposed to the open air, she witnessed the funeral from a window. Her illness from this time rapidly increased; and January 17th, 1849, her sufferings were terminated by death. The following statement appears in an account of her experience, published in "*The Church*," of the following April:—

"Another source of great spiritual benefit to her, were the conversations and prayers of her venerable grandmamma, whose promptitude and holy skill in seizing opportunities of usefulness, have been honoured of God to the eternal good of many. She was much attached to Mary, and took great interest in her spiritual welfare."

The body of the deceased was buried by the side of her aunt's; and in the same spot the aged saint, who had traced with delight the growth of religion in her young relatives, and had often addressed her counsels to their willing ears, now waits with them the resurrection of the just.

In the midst of her distress under this sad bereavement she did not forget to seek with her accustomed earnestness the profit of others; and immediately after the funeral sermon, which was delivered by the Rev. J. Alexander, of Norwich, she addressed a letter of affectionate exhortation to the young men who had officiated

a hearer at her grand-daughter's funeral. The following is the original draught of the letter:—

Shilton, January 21st, 1849.

My dear young Friends,

I am desirous that the sudden removal by death of my beloved and deeply regretted grand-daughter Mary Wenmouth, may prove a means of awakening in her surviving young friends a greater concern to seek the Lord in the days of their youth; therefore I feel a wish to address a few lines to those who were called to bear her to her early grave, hoping it may be the means of your spiritual life, that should you be called early to appear before God, you may like her be prepared by divine grace to leave this world with cheerful resignation, having a good hope that to die will be eternal gain. This stroke of divine providence has greatly affected my mind, being so unexpected and sudden. When I look back to the time she was with us at the harvest tea parties, in health and spirits, I could not but think what a contrast was before our eyes; instead of seeing her walking in the garden with her young friends in cheerful friendship, her dear cold remains were enclosed in the coffin, and many of her companions were surrounding the grave which was to close her body from our sight till the heavens be no more. O then, was it not well with her that she had the inward witness in her heart that she had sought and found Jesus the good Shepherd of his sheep, who gathers the lambs in his bosom? What would she have done without a Saviour! in vain might she have called to her young companions to save her even from the sharp affliction she was called to endure, and how much more in vain to save her soul from eternal death; but I am

happy to be satisfied that she had been delighting in the Lord and his ways whilst she was enjoying the friendship of her beloved relatives and young associates. Thus through grace she was "prepared for longer life and fit for early death." And now, my young friends, shall this providence pass before your eyes without some serious profit to your soul?

"O may you fly to Jesus fly,
Whose powerful arm can save!"

O let the emptiness of this world, which the late solemn providences have shown us, prove the happy means of your becoming decidedly on the Lord's side; and whilst you and others may look at the place vacated by the death of a young friend who we hoped would long fill it, and who we expected would soon publicly confess the Lord before men, may you be led to say, "Her God shall be my God, and her people my people;" and as she is no longer able to own the Lord by a public profession, I will, through God's grace, seek him now he is to be found; I will draw near to him by secret prayer and reading the Scriptures, I will fill up her vacant seat at the evening meetings and the Lord's day services; thus may the eternal Spirit use this affecting providence to promote your eternal welfare in bringing you to decide for Christ. Be assured, my dear young friends, you have my ardent prayers and warmest wishes that you may follow the departed as she followed Christ. Many dear Christian friends are looking at you with much interest, and hoping that you and others may from this time set out to serve the Lord. I assure you of my Christian affection, and am,

Your warm-hearted friend,

S. COOKE.

CHAPTER XIII.

RETURN TO BUSINESS.

It was a happy thing for Mrs. Cooke, that she had now little time for brooding over her sorrows: only a few words of passionate grief and affection, entered here and there on the pages of her diary, show how deep were the wounds which her spirit had received. Her son's loss was even greater than her own; and his three motherless children, the eldest still an infant, made a powerful appeal to her compassion. She therefore left her beloved retirement to take charge once more of the household of her son.

On the 15th of the following June she lost her brother John. This visitation affected her with a more tranquil and mitigated sorrow; for his life had been one of almost constant trial; and of the anxieties which had often agitated his sister, he had been the object of not a few: she rejoiced therefore at the thought that her dear brother had at length surmounted all his troubles, and that "the weary was at rest." The following entry records this event in her diary:—

"15*th*. June, my greatly beloved brother, John Cubitt, died. Much as I loved him, I could not but rejoice with my grief that he was delivered from all his afflictions and trials, and had got safe to his dear Saviour."

January 13th, 1850, her eldest son was chosen to the deacon's office, which his father had held in the same church for many years. It was no small gratification to his mother, that his deportment as a professor of religion had been such as to induce the church to select him for this office; and that he himself took such an interest in the cause of Christ as to be willing to undertake its responsibilities. Her fondest wish for all her children was that they should be entirely devoted to the Lord.

We have had frequent occasion to observe the attachment of Mrs. Cooke to the Lord's day, and the steadiness with which she sought to apply its teachings to her spiritual profit. In this respect she differed from many who profess great spirituality of mind, but estimate the value of the sermons they hear, solely according to the *comfort* afforded by them. Her views on this subject are exhibited in an entry made in June, 1850. The same memorandum exhibits her cordial respect for her pastor. This always distinguished her, whoever sustained that relation. Mr. Beard and Mr. Clark of Worstead, were both highly esteemed by her; she frequently also expresses the pleasure and edification she derived from the ministry of Mr. Pickers; and his successor in office inherited the same regard. Indeed, while she esteemed the ministers of Christ in general very highly in love for their work's sake, and felt it a privilege and an honour

to entertain them, she was not accustomed to desire novelty. On the contrary, she gave her own minister the uppermost place in her esteem, and was habitually careful not to wound his feelings by any appearance of preference for others. The entry referred to is as follows:—

"The blessed Lord's day; oh how I ought to prize it! Mr. Diboll, of Salehouse, (now missionary in Fernando Po, West Africa,) preached three times. I heard him best in the afternoon, from 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord.' He is a plain preacher, rather high in doctrine, but I think a useful man to the plain and untaught. I feel a great respect for him; but my dear pastor has been so useful to my soul, in keeping me awake, and stirring me to duty, that I seldom hear a stranger well."

At the beginning of January, 1850, she writes:

"This is a gloomy week, as it reminds us of dear Emma's death and funeral.

"17*th*, darling Mary Venimore died on this day of the month last year; but we joy in our grief.

"*February* 3*rd*. Heard an excellent sermon from Hebrews xii, 1: 'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,' &c. Through mercy I enjoyed it much, and was lifted up above my earthly sorrows.

"*March* 3*rd*. Felt very poorly, as I have done some time. O that I may be much weaned from earth by the trials I meet with here.

"*May* 9*th*. I do not feel so well as I did. O that all my trials may bring me nearer to the blessed Jesus.

"11*th*. Dear Mrs. V—— called. I have often

enjoyed her prayers, but never more than to-day. I have been reading the Life of Mrs. Boardman Judson, which she lent me; felt it a great privilege to have it.

"21*st*. The Annual Meeting of the Association at Aylsham, I had the mercy to go; Miss Wells kindly took me there. I got through the journey wonderfully, and much enjoyed the meetings."

A severe affliction attacked her July 9th, and her family were summoned in expectation of her death, which was hourly looked for. She was often but partially aware of what was passing around her, until the 14th, when the fever began to subside. During this period she had not her usual clearness and confidence, yet she felt that Christ was her sole hope; and she trusted that all was right. She says:—

"The medicine affected my head much, but through mercy I was kept calm and serene; and the doctor attributes my recovery in a great degree to this, and my temperance habits. My affliction has brought me very low in body and nerve; but *I wish to hope* that I shall 'recover strength before I go hence, to be no more seen.'"

This "wish to hope" for restoration shews the bias of her inclinations. Independently of the interests of those she loved, she had "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ;" and it was not without an effort that she could bring herself to be willing to return from the gates of blessedness, to the agitations and sufferings of this world.

January 5th, 1852, she had another attack of illness, short but sharp. Her medical attendant thought it not unlikely she would die suddenly. On learning this she wrote:—

"May I be more heavenly-minded, so that I may be in a suitable state to die in. Through mercy I was very happy when at the worst; and trusted my Saviour would not cast me off, but save me with an everlasting salvation."

On February 24th her youngest son, with whom she had been living during his widowhood, entered a second time into the married state. This was a welcome and necessary release from cares to which she was not equal; and she returned thankfully to her own house, after an absence of more than three years.

CHAPTER XIV.

DECAY AND DEATH.

MRS. COOKE returned to her retirement for little else than to die. Her capacity for exertion was gone. She could no longer visit the sick. Severe and protracted illnesses were allotted to her, and each one left her weaker than the last. For long periods together she was kept from public worship, her "soul longing, yea even fainting for the courts of the Lord."

Dwelling upon the probability of her sudden death, she addressed the following letter to her daughter, which has been found, since her removal, among her papers:—

October 30th, 1852.

MY DEAR CHILD,

Though I am in my usual health, I often think I may have some sudden attack, which may unfit me to write or to speak. I therefore, write this, that you may know it is my wish * * * * that if a funeral sermon be preached for me, as little as possible may be said of the dead. My wish in having one at all, is, to impress the importance of religion; and a pre-

paration, through Christ, to meet death as a conquered foe; to lead the minds of people, of all ages, to prepare for their latter end, seeing that here we have no continuing city; and to place in view the pleasures and profits of religion for time and eternity. If the family take tea at my house on the day of the funeral, I hope they will have prayer and singing, that a short address will be given, and thanksgiving for the hope that I am got safe home to my Saviour.

My tenderest love remains with all my children till death; and I hope they will all be sincere and humble followers of their dear and then departed mother, in every thing wherein she followed Christ; that through his merits we may all meet to part no more. Press forward, looking unto Jesus! Time is short; it may be very short with some I leave behind. O live for Christ, and the good of his cause, of your own souls, and those of your beloved offspring. Tell them frequently that their grandmamma hoped they would love and serve the blessed Jesus, that they may see her again, and that in heaven. Adieu, dear Mary.

I am, your affectionate mother.

At the beginning of 1853, she thus writes :—

"My mind is often beclouded; my head aches very much; and I am so lame that I can hardly get into my pew at chapel; yet, I am glad to say, I got out in my Bath chair twice at the end of last year, and now in the gig, since this year came in. I am like a good man, who said,

> 'From what strange cause springs this peculiar strife?
> I long to die, yet still am fond of life!'

O Jesus, fit me, and take me to thyself!"

At the latter end of January, she speaks of herself as busy in assorting a new parcel of tracts. She was for many years a regular subscriber to the Tract Society, and continued so till her death; and she made much use of its publications in her active efforts for the good of her neighbours. To one she would send a tract carefully selected, with reference to the age, condition, or character of the person whose benefit she desired; to another, unable to read, or unlikely to take the trouble, she would carry and read it herself, sometimes wisely adding observations of her own, and often as wisely withholding them, according as she judged one method or the other the likelier to be successful. When the person she sought to benefit belonged to a higher class than the poor, she often adopted the plan of sending a book, as more likely to be acceptable than a mere tract; and this was commonly selected from the publications of the same excellent society. With it she would frequently send a letter, written in a style scrupulously respectful, but faithfully setting forth the necessity of a change of heart in order to salvation, and urging an immediate application to the blood of atonement. Thus on the sudden death of a neighbour in April, her diary records:—

"I sent a letter and four tracts; it is so sudden a shock, they feel it deeply; may God sanctify it to all."

And, June 2nd, she writes:—

"Mrs. —— is very ill, never likely to be better; I have written to her, and sent her a book; but do not know how to go there."

Occasionally she would find an opportunity of addressing a person of still higher rank. In such a case her mode of communication would be by a letter,

accompanied, perhaps, by a well-selected biography of some eminent Christian, in the same rank of life with the person it was sent to. On such an occasion, she would be careful to procure the best edition, or the neatest binding, thus omitting no innocent means of gaining for her present the reception she desired.

August 2nd, after attending the house of God, she was again taken ill. At the commencement of this attack, her difficulty of breathing was so great that she could not sleep, and did not expect to live till morning: and the following two Sabbaths she was kept at home. Her mind on this occasion was not so happy as usual, and she writes:—

"I have not enjoyed my Sabbaths at home, this illness."

She partially recovered from this attack, and was again permitted to go to chapel, but weakness and suffering were now her constant companions. At the beginning of 1854, she was again severely afflicted, and her writing becomes almost illegible. The following extracts shew her bodily condition.

"*January 4th.* Felt poorly, more pain and weakness in my joints.

"*5th.* Grievous pains indeed.

"*6th.* I never suffered before in this way, but pray for patience. The pain in my legs is a new and severe trial; yet I have much to be thankful for. O that the Lord may keep me from murmuring! I feel so in the dark, and my head so affected. Yet I long to have more of the presence of Jesus: I am saying,

'Yet I love Thee, and adore:
O for grace to love Thee more!'

"12*th*. My family are very kind to me: but I suffer heavy pains.

"15*th*. I remain very weak, but the pain is not so violent."

This was a very long and distressing illness. For more than half a year Mrs. Cooke was unable to get to chapel. During this lengthened imprisonment one of her family commonly spent the Lord's day afternoon with her; and generally took care to carry her as much as possible of the morning sermon; and in the evening she often received, in the same way, a sketch of the discourse delivered in the afternoon. Many of the subjects and sentiments thus reported to her are entered in her journal, so anxious was she to make the best use of the advantages within her reach. Her friends were careful, also, to keep her informed of every movement in the church which was likely to interest her. A circular letter had been sent to each of the members who lived at a distance, inquiring into their spiritual state, and recommending them to unite themselves, if possible, to churches in their own neighbourhood. Some of the replies to this circular were placed in her hands, and afforded her much gratification. She says:—

"I have found them pleasing and profitable. I hope an annual letter will be exchanged between the distant members and the church, as they do not seem to like to leave us."

Some further extracts from the diary of this period will be interesting. Referring to a funeral sermon for two deceased members, she says:—

"I wished I had been able to go to Ingham, but could not walk from one room to another. May the Lord

[illegible] the very afflictive providences in the good of my soul.

"31st January. Feel very weak and feverish as well as faint, and have difficulty in rising from my seat, and getting in and out of bed. I went a good deal this morning in the great struggle I have felt this last month, but hope I do not murmur. O that I may have a sense of pardoning love and mercy, if it be the will of God, that my nights may not be so dark and dreary."

Referring to an instance of sudden death, she says:—

"It is a solemn event. I feel it. May I profit by it. I am a poor, weak, nervous creature. My pains are worse so that I cannot walk: nor can I lie or sleep as I used to do: I lose my strength much altogether. If it please God I shall be glad to be in my old way, or to have a sanctified use of this trial. I wish, if I am soon to die, that I may be made aware of it, and prepare to meet my God.

"*February* 19*th*. Mr. Webb preached at Ingham. A very wet time; but people got out. I could not, nor do I expect ever to be able to do so again. My pains have increased the past week. O that I felt more happy under all my pains, cares, and afflictions. But I groan with the burden of inward depravity: my head aches much, and that discomposes me.

'I would, but cannot sing,
I would, but cannot pray;
For Satan meets me when I try,
And drives my soul away.'

Often do I say, 'O that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away and be at rest!'

"20*th*. Mr. Webb called and stopped twenty-five minutes. He prayed and conversed very sweetly on the best things.

"*March 6th*. I was worse yesterday and to-day in my breathing and my cough. I am still a poor afflicted being. Dear William helped me into bed. I felt very sadly. I prayed after I was in bed, while he was here; felt better afterwards; but had a poor night. I am at a loss to judge what the Lord is about to do with me. I pray, if death is to be the issue, I may feel the Saviour precious, rejoice in his salvation, depart in peace, and sleep in Jesus. O for more grace to bear all my affliction with patience and submission.

"15*th*. Mothers' meeting. I did not read, but prayed a few minutes. Then four friends prayed, and I concluded. I enjoyed the meeting more than usual."

It may surprise the reader to find Mrs. Cooke presiding at a mothers' meeting in the midst of so much weakness and suffering. She had established a monthly meeting of this kind several years before, thinking that she might in this way do something for God; and she would not give it up so long as she could by any means continue it. The meeting was carried on regularly, with but very few intermissions, till within a month or two of her death.

"19*th*. Mrs. W. Cooke sat with me this afternoon. Gave me most of Mr. V——'s sermon in the morning on Christ's temptation in the wilderness.

'O may my heart, by grace renewed,
Be my Redeemer's throne;
And be my stubborn will subdued,
His government to own.'

O my dear Saviour, cheer my soul; let thy love be shed abroad in my heart! If I am to live, may it please the Lord to restore me to comparative strength and comfort, or give me to have my will swallowed up in his.

'O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb.'

"*April 2nd.* I hope I may say that for a few days I have enjoyed more of religion than I have done since my affliction began: I hope I have had a more wrestling spirit for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to feel the blessed Jesus more precious; that I may be more resigned to my trial in not being able to go to the house of God. I certainly feel the loss, and shed some tears; but I hope not in a murmuring spirit. I had some pleasure in reading good Mr. Bickersteth's Life: but am tempted to think I have done wrong in sending —— Dr. Gordon's Life, as a small acknowledgment for the trouble he has had to get young —— into a free school; as he has taken no notice of the present.

"*9th.* It is my trial that I cannot follow the Lord in public worship now. My soul is often cast down within me: but I would hope still in God, that I shall yet praise him, who is the help of my countenance and my God. O that the Saviour may be more precious to me!

'He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And he my rising sun.'

"*24th.* I have been reading Mrs. Stowe's "Earthly Care a Heavenly Discipline." The hymn at the end of it was sweet to me.

'Nearer to thee, my God,
Nearer to thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be
Nearer to thee!'"

By the middle of May her health was somewhat improved; and though unable as yet to go to chapel, she enjoyed a privilege which she highly prized. The annual missionary meeting at Ingham was held on the 18th, and a public breakfast of the friends of the Society took place the next morning, followed by devotional exercises and addresses. As this latter meeting was held at Stalham, Mrs. Cooke hoped to be able to attend it. After breakfast, accordingly, she was dragged in her Bath chair to the place of meeting and carried in. Messrs. Wheeler, Dawson, Green, Gould, R. Cooke, and J. D. Smith, delivered the addresses. Mrs. Cooke much enjoyed the opportunity: her friends also were very much gratified to see her out; and after the meeting they crowded round her chair in a manner which must have convinced her how great were the reverence and affection with which she was regarded. As it was a warm sunny day, she was then dragged to her son's garden, whither several friends gathered after the meeting. She thus, for the first time for some months, enjoyed the air, and had opportunities of conversing with her friends. Considering her weakness, however, the exertions of the day were great; she was much fatigued; and her disorders were for the time aggravated. That day week was passed in bed.

On Sunday, June 4th, she wrote:—

"This morning I got into my sitting room again: got through the day tolerably. O that I were fit for heaven and got safe there!

"*July 9th.* This evening I was dragged to the school-room, after half a year's absence from preaching.

"16*th.* I have to record more knowledge of the depravity of my nature, and my proneness to evil. O when shall I awake up with the Saviour's image? I long to be gone, that I may grieve and sin no more.

"23*rd.* I was permitted to go to Ingham once more, after an absence of twenty-nine weeks: returned after the morning service, and was able to get to the school-room in the evening. I had great difficulty in getting into my chaise; but was thankful to get to hearing again."

On the 8th of August she received a visit from her family. In anticipation of it she wrote thus to her daughter:—

"I hope I shall not forget that I have the sentence of death in myself, that I should not trust in myself: for I feel that, though in some respects I am better, I am a dying creature. Well, through mercy I do not wish to live always. O that the life I now live in the flesh may be by faith in the Son of God."

Another severe attack of illness came upon her in the beginning of November: she says of it:—

"I sometimes think this will be my last illness. At times I walk in darkness and have no light; but at other times I can say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'"

At the close of the year she expresses herself thus:—

"I have been five Lord's days kept at home; and I sometimes think I shall never get to chapel again. But

I am thankful that I can see, hear, speak, use my hands, &c.; so that I can yet say, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.' My fear is lest I should be taken senseless and paralysed, so that I cannot tell my dear children of my hope in Christ. Therefore I wish now to state that all my hopes of salvation are fixed on him."

At the beginning of 1855, the last year of her life, she says:—

"The Lord has spared me to enter another year: how long or short my time is I know not. I pray that I may be found right when the summons comes. O may I find that to die is gain, and to live is Christ. Many old people are dying, and I am looking out for death. O that the sting may be taken away."

She then mentions the names of several who were recently dead; and adds:—

"It yet remains for me to die! At times I look at it with dread, at others with joy. I continue very weak and low. I am more nervous than I used to be, my head is much affected; my throat and tongue are bad, and my swallowing difficult.

'But oh, if Christ and heaven be mine,
How sweet the accents, how divine!'"

At the latter end of January her brother Benjamin died. He was the oldest of her own brothers, and the last survivor of the family except herself. He had enjoyed remarkably good health till within a short time of his departure. She was much pleased that a few years before his death, he had become an open professor of religion, having joined the Baptist church at Neatis-

head: after this she felt herself drawn still nearer to him as a brother, not only in the flesh, but in the Lord; and when he died, she did not sorrow as those who have no hope, but cheerfully looked forward to an everlasting reunion in heaven.

We resume the extracts from the diary.

"*February* 4th. This evening dear Robert came and prayed with me, and talked of the sermons. I was very glad of it, as I have been greatly distressed the last few days with temptations from the enemy of souls, wicked thoughts, and distressing fears from lowness and nervousness.

"5th. Mr. Venimore called, and prayed and talked with me. I told him the state of my mind, and the comfort I had had from these words, 'I will trust and not be afraid.' Through mercy my mind is rather more comfortable now. Mrs. Lewis's letter was useful to me. She spoke of the Lord's people as being a tried and tempted people; but that they got safe, through all, to heaven, through the merits and intercession of Jesus: she observed, that he was tempted, and could feel for his children. I felt it a word in season, and hope it led me afresh to my Lord and Saviour."

The temptations and spiritual distresses so frequently referred to in the diary, were the subject of many conversations with her pastor: and it was painful beyond expression to see so eminent a Christian weeping, and almost in despair, under the apprehension of divine wrath. Sometimes her mind was in so much agitation and darkness, that the truth of the gospel revelation itself seemed involved in doubt; and the state of her mind at such times was a distressing illustration of the Scripture, "If

the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do." It may seem surprising, that a believer of so long standing, so remarkable for the watchful consistency of her life, and so uniformly close in her walk with God, should be liable to these serious interruptions of her peace. But the ways of God are not as our ways. The tendency of her mind to sadness and apprehension, and the effect produced upon it by bodily disease, will go far to account for these painful visitations. Happily, when she was in tolerable health, and her head was not affected, she was accustomed to enjoy a confident and steady hope; and it ought to be noticed, to the praise of divine faithfulness, that amid the last decays of nature her confidence in God was strong.

Towards the latter end of March her indisposition again much increased. In addition to her other distresses she now complains of a sense of choking, which was sometimes so violent as to excite a fear of actual suffocation. She says:—

"I now think again that death is hovering near, and will soon call me away: yet when the fear of dying is removed, I am ready to say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.'

"*April 22nd.* I am very sadly to-day; indeed I have been very ill, and am never likely to be well again. I have not been downstairs for months. I have been reading, with much pleasure, Bonar's 'Night of Weeping.'"

Feeling a little better May 1st, she says:—

"I begin to think I shall have to linger on in this world. May God give me patience and submission to wait 'all the days of my appointed time, till my change

come;' and when the Lord calls me home, may I say with the poet,

'Glad when thou bid'st me earth resign,
Secure of heaven if thou art mine.'"

On May 29th the Annual Meeting of the Association was held at Neatishead. She had been accustomed to attend these gatherings with great regularity, but she was now confined to her room. Her expressions shew how sincerely she mourned the loss of her privileges, and at the same time display her constant anxiety to be doing good.

"The Association is held at Neatishead to-day; but I am spending a dull and, I fear, an unprofitable day in my upper sitting room, where I have an opportunity of seeing friends pass to the meeting; and though I could not help dropping a few tears when I saw others go, and thought that with me it was for ever over, yet I thanked the Lord that till last year I used to attend; and I looked forward with a hope that I shall soon, through grace, join the assembly and church of the first-born. I was enabled to lie passive in God's hand under my affliction, and know no will but his. I then thought what could I do for any good at home. I did not seem to know how to write to any one, to good purpose, so thought I would call to mind the way the Lord has led me in this wilderness world, in calling me to know, follow, and serve him."

The substance of this account has been already given.

In the beginning of June she again expresses a fear lest she might be destined to linger out years of helplessness. This prospect was evidently a very sad one to her. She had so long been accustomed to a life of activity, dividing her time between domestic duty, the worship of

God, and attention to the spiritual wants of others, and passing from one engagement to another with scarcely an interval of repose, that the idea of a life of forced inactivity was very painful to her, and still more the prospect of being a burden to her family: though she often acknowledges their kindness to her, she appears to have had a painful apprehension that she should tire them out. But it pleased God to order otherwise for her; after a few more months of weariness she entered into rest.

On the 10th of this month she was once more permitted to get to the evening service at the schoolroom, after nearly eight months absence from public worship. She got through pretty well. But the following Sabbath she was a prisoner all day in consequence of the weather. 24th she was at the schoolroom again, and heard what she designates a most delightful sermon from "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." She adds:—

"There was a large and attentive audience. Oh! how I prayed that the Lord would make the sermon useful to the many that were there."

On July 1st she once more got to Ingham, and though much fatigued was able to attend the Missionary Prayer Meeting, at Stalham, the next evening. The following Lord's day she had a feast of fat things. At a church meeting which she attended letters were read from three young persons who were candidates for baptism; and pleasing and satisfactory accounts were given of them by their respective visitors. With gladness of heart she held up her hand for their admission into the church; and she afterwards recorded the particulars in her diary with great minuteness.

On the same day she heard the announcement of the open air services which were conducted throughout the county in the following month. This movement had her full sympathy, and was aided by her fervent prayers.

On Sunday morning, July 22nd, she was at the nine o'clock prayer meeting, which she had constantly attended when she was able. On that day, too, she witnessed the admission into the church of the young people accepted a fortnight before; and united with them in shewing forth the Lord's death.

The following Sunday, also, she was at the morning prayer meeting. Mr. V—— being from home on that day, Mr. Porter preached, and she "heard him comfortably." The next assembly in which she worshipped was the assembly of the glorified!

At the beginning of August she was again taken ill. In the expectation of death she wrote:—

"I hope I am stayed on the Lord, and trusting alone in him for salvation.

"12*th August*. Very sadly; but the Lord is my stay and my hope.

"*September* 9*th*. (Sunday.) Tolerably comfortable: but feel the loss of public means.

"23*rd*. I have been kept at home by affliction for eight weeks, and have no prospect of getting out, from my lameness, swelled limbs, and weakness. But I hope the Lord will give me patience and fortitude, and cause my will to be swallowed up in his. I wish I enjoyed religion more at home. I have great conflicting with my wicked heart and sinful nature; yet I hope I hate sin.

"30*th*. Nine Sabbaths from the house of God. I feel better in health, but very lame and weak.

"*October* 14*th*. Read Sketches of Sermons, by Rev. J. H. Evans, and Mrs. R. Cooke read me the letters on the death of Mrs. Evans; she and I prayed together. I spent a comfortable afternoon, but I wept when I remembered Zion!

"17*th*. I am a very poor creature, but through mercy I am supported. It is painful that my hands and fingers swell, as well as my ancles and knees, but I pray for patience and a sanctified use of all my trials.

"21*st*. Twelve Sundays at home. I am very weak; my legs and hands swell much. I often wonder if I am to be called away. I pray I may not live for nought.

"28*th*. I feel very dreary. O may I be preserved safe unto the heavenly kingdom! I want to love the Saviour more, and trust him where I cannot trace him.

> 'Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,
> He whom I fix my hopes upon:
> His track I see; and I'll pursue
> The narrow way, till him I view.'

"Should any of my loved children, or grandchildren, see this, let them hope for me, that I am upon the rock, Christ Jesus; that all my hopes are on him; I am lost without him. I feel daily, that I am going gradually to the grave; getting weaker and weaker. But I praise the Lord, that I have the use of my reasoning faculties, my hearing, &c. My family, too, are very kind and dear to me.

"*November* 5*th*. Mrs. Postle called on me: she prayed with me, and I enjoyed the season much. I wish to look to, and trust in my blessed Jesus; but I am not so well in head, hands, limbs, &c., so that I lose much enjoyment: yet I would cast my care on him. I

[illegible] sat down in my chair [illegible] I may [illegible] be prepared, [illegible]

[illegible] the diary. The remaining [illegible] chiefly to [illegible] She [illegible]

"[illegible] The Bible Meeting at Stadham."

This was remarkable. Mrs. Jane had been a friend and supporter of the Bible Society from an early period, and for many years regularly attended its annual meetings at Norwich and North Walsham. In 1838, when associations were multiplied in the county, by the active efforts of Mr. Wenham, she regarded his proceedings with real satisfaction, and while she lived at the mill, her house was regularly his home, when he was in the neighbourhood. She herself was the zealous secretary of the Stadham association until her death: and it was in that the last words, with difficulty traced, by her swollen and enfeebled fingers, on the pages of her diary, should be what they actually were.

She had been accustomed to record what she knew, or could learn, of the minute circumstances connected with the meetings;—the place, attendance, speakers, &c. On this occasion, the meeting, which had been always held in the schoolroom, was removed to a much more eligible building, a corn hall, recently erected in the village; and the attendance was increased in proportion. But her powers were too much exhausted to allow of her noticing these particulars, and the five words copied above, form the whole of the entry. It deserves to be added, that the warm-hearted agent, who had so often been her guest, felt so much veneration for his friend, that he

spontaneously came from Norwich, to attend her funeral. A tribute to her memory, in extracts of a letter from him, will be found at the end of the next chapter.

At the time of this last record in the diary, she was steadily weakening for death. She could no longer be dragged into her sitting room, but was confined to her bed chamber, and soon after to her bed. Her bodily distress affectingly increased, but her mind was calm. In her days of vigour and activity, she had often shrunk from the thought of the darkness, and cold, and confinement of the grave, and the painful peculiarities of decay; but these thoughts were not permitted to trouble her on her death bed. Sometimes, too, she had been terrified in anticipating the unknown agonies of dying; but she did not appear to think of them when death was near; and through mercy, she was spared the endurance of them when he arrived. Often, during her many illnesses, had doubts and perplexities overshadowed her mind, but these did not trouble her at last; the eventide was light! She fervently prayed to depart, and to be with Christ; but, still jealous of herself, was afraid she should be sinfully unwilling to wait all the days of her appointed time. A few days before her death, she charged those about her, to tell all her friends that she died happy. Some of her little grandsons, being taken, one at a time, to see her, she took her farewell of each, with an impressive exhortation to devote himself early to the Lord. Her last efforts were for the poor, and for the cause of Christ. She carefully put aside the donations she had been accustomed to make to several poor widows at Christmas, telling her servant how they were to be disposed of; and when she could scarcely articulate, she gave directions to

her son, that all her subscriptions to the cause of Christ, should be paid to the end of the year.

Her pastor called on her after the evening service of Sunday, December 16th, when she whispered her steadfast confidence in Christ, and expressed a hope that she should depart to be with him before the morning. On the Monday, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Cooke paid her their last visit. On their taking leave of her, she was asked if she had anything to say to them, when she was heard to utter the words, "Happy, happy; Christ is precious to my soul." These are supposed to have been her last words. But she lived till about nine o'clock, on the morning of Tuesday, December 18th, when her daughter, and one of her daughters-in-law, who had retired to an adjoining room, were suddenly summoned to her bedside, and arrived just in time to witness her departure. There were no convulsions, no death struggles; it was a mere cessation of life; the allotted period of her service had expired, and the servant of God ceased from her labours; the pilgrimage was over, and the pilgrim was at rest.

As the religious observances connected with Mrs. Cooke's decease, were conducted according to full directions which she left, and the scriptures and hymns employed were all selected by herself, the particulars will be given here.

Soon after death, and before the attendants proceeded to lay forth the body, solemn prayer was offered by the bedside, that the providence might be sanctified, and the minds of the bereaved relatives sustained.

The funeral took place on Christmas day. This enabled a large number of persons to attend; an object which the departed saint carefully sought, on every occasion which might benefit the souls of men. It was also agreeable to many, especially of the poorer class, whose reverence for her memory prompted them to swell the mourning train, which followed her body to the grave. The service was conducted by Mr. Webb, the pastor of the church at Worstead, of which the deceased had been a member, in the former part of her life.

Before the coffin was screwed down, the family were gathered round it, and the face of the dead having been uncovered, the following hymn was sung:—

"'Tis finished, 'tis done! the spirit is fled;
Our mother is gone: the Christian is dead:
The Christian is living in Jesus's love,
And gladly receiving a kingdom above.

All honour and praise are Jesus's due,
Supported by grace, she fought her way through;
Triumphantly glorious, through Jesus's zeal,
And more than victorious, o'er sin, death, and hell.

Then let us record the conquering name,
Our captain and Lord, with shoutings proclaim;
Who trust in his passion, and follow their head,
To certain salvation shall surely be led.

O Jesus, lead on thy militant care,
And give us the crown of righteousness there,
Where dazzled with glory, the seraphim gaze,
Or prostrate adore Thee, in silence of praise.

Within us display thy love when we die,
And bear us away to mansions on high;
The kingdom be given of glory divine,
And crown us in heaven eternally thine."

Prayer was then offered by Mr. Webb.

This part of the solemnities of the day made a powerful impression.

After these proceedings the procession was formed. It was joined, on its way to Ingham, by many friends, in gigs and on foot, and many more were waiting in the burial ground.

At the grave, Hymn 18, Book i, Dr. Watts, was sung, beginning

"Hear what the voice from heaven proclaims,"

and a short address was given, and prayer offered by the officiating minister. In the chapel, after singing Hymn 3, Book ii, beginning

"Why do we mourn departed friends,"

he gave an appropriate and feeling address from Amos iv, 12: "Prepare to meet thy God." Hymn 5, Book i, beginning

"Naked as from the earth we came,"

was then sung, and the service closed with a short prayer.

After tea the mourning family sang Hymn 648, New Selection, beginning

"Heaven is a place of rest from sin."

John xi was then read, and prayer offered by Mr. Webb; a suitable address was also given by him, as well as by Mr. Wiseman, and some members of the family.

The funeral sermon was delivered by the son-in-law and pastor of the deceased, on Sunday, 30th December, from Micah ii, 10: "Arise ye and depart, for this is not

your rest, because it is polluted." The hymns sung were 614 New Selection, beginning

"Lo on a narrow neck of land;"

667, New Selection, beginning

"Jerusalem, my happy home,"

and 630, New Selection, beginning

"While to the grave our friends are borne."

A very large congregation were assembled, who listened with lively interest to some particulars which were given of the deceased, and which have been incorporated in this Memoir.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARACTER.

PERSONAL religion may be contemplated in three aspects, Sentiment, Experience, and Practice. But the first is useless, and the second illusory, unless they jointly produce the last. In Mrs. Cooke they did so in a remarkable degree. The settled business of her life, the uppermost thought of her heart, was to serve God.

In sentiment she was a Calvinist. She believed the effectual calling of a sinner to be entirely of grace, in conformity with a personal election to eternal life: and she regarded the atonement of Christ as the only foundation of hope to every child of Adam. But she was a moderate Calvinist. She herself earnestly exhorted sinners to repent and believe the gospel; and she estimated sermons very much by the directness and importunity with which they did so. She believed that all, without distinction, are invited to the Saviour, and that all who comply with the invitation will be saved. She was a Baptist, she believed the sprinkling of infants not to be true baptism, but a corruption, unknown to

the apostles, and the parent of other, and more fatal corruptions.

She held her sentiments firmly and without wavering, but she doubted not the conscientiousness and piety of many who differed from her. Therefore, though a Baptist, she advocated and practised free communion; and, though a Calvinist, she often in her days of health and vigour attended the week-day services of the Wesleyan chapel at Stalham, and could hold spiritual conversation with a Wesleyan without embarrassment or restraint.

The reason of this was, that her religion had its seat in the heart—it was experienced and enjoyed; and with others who experienced and enjoyed it, whatever their creed, she had a broad common ground, where, out of sight of ecclesiastical and doctrinal differences, she felt only that she and her fellow disciples were a part of the same body; that

> "Their fears, their hopes, their aims were one;
> Their comforts and their cares."

This also produced in her a remarkable attachment to the worship of God. While she was well, and, indeed, long after she began to feel the infirmities of advancing years, her presence might be calculated on, whenever the house of God was opened for worship. There were few things about which she was more particular than a punctual attendance on the week night services: she herself was scarcely ever absent from them; and she was never willing that her children should pay visits on the evenings when they occurred: only one or two instances can be discovered in the course of several years in which they were permitted to do so; and these cost her much

misgiving and uneasiness. She rightly argued that it was not the poor who could be expected to attend these services very numerously, because of the exhaustion occasioned by their labour; and therefore that it rested with those who were in a different position, to take care that the house of God was not forsaken. For many years the prayer meetings owed much of their interest to her punctuality, as her remarkable gifts in prayer were often called into exercise on those occasions: but when the female members of the church were no longer invited to lead in prayer, her attendance was not the less regular: whoever was absent, Mrs. Cooke was sure to be in her place, if by any means she could get to meeting: nor was this regularity diminished, till, after many years of widowhood, infirmity so increased as to compel her, occasionally, and at length generally, to stay at home: even then her heart was still towards the house of God; and her friends were not unfrequently gladdened with her presence, when it could not have been expected, and seemed hardly prudent. Nay, even when nature was so nearly worn out, that she was incapable of any sustained attention to the service, she would still, sometimes be dragged in her Bath chair to the school room, and rouse herself, for a few moments at a time, to catch and enjoy an occasional sentiment expressed in the services. She also constantly attended the prayer meetings held in the morning and noon of the Lord's day: and so great was her interest in these meetings that although she was very seldom able to attend them the last two years of her life, yet the name of the friend whose turn it was to preside at the noon meeting is generally entered in her diary till within a month of her departure. The

extracts given in the body of this narrative abundantly shew how deeply she mourned the loss of public privileges when illness deprived her of them. She could use with more truth than most professors the language of David, "I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."

Her love for social prayer was equally remarkable: hence arose her custom of asking ministers and other Christian friends who called on her, to engage in prayer before they left.

Of her private intercourse with the Hearer of prayer, we necessarily know but little. When her children were young her rule appears to have been that of the Psalmist —"Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray." Concerning her devotional habits later in life we only know that she was accustomed to carry all her cares and sorrows to the throne of grace.

Her love to the word of God was a further proof of the experimental character of her religion. Several years ago she mentioned, as a special mercy, that she had learned to take delight in reading the Bible. The observation was noticed at the time, as an evidence that the attainment was comparatively recent; or, at least, that the pleasure she derived from the employment then, was far greater than it had been at an earlier period. There is no reason to suppose that she had ever been in the habit of neglecting it since she tasted that the Lord is gracious: but her early study of God's word was probably rather the result of a sense of duty than a source of delight: at length, however, her eyes were opened to behold wondrous things out of God's law;

and from that time she fed upon divine truth with zest and eagerness.

But her spirituality was not of that spurious kind which indisposes for activity. It was manifested by its fruits: it led her to do all things for the glory of God: it prompted her in domestic duty: it sent her forth on errands of mercy; and that often when nature was wearied and claimed repose. It made her very watchful over her own spirit: it taught her to govern the tongue, which the apostle James describes as the most difficult of masteries, and she came very near to the perfection he attributes to those who "offend not in word."

Judging from observations in various parts of her diary, we must conclude that she was naturally of a hasty temper. Her complaints on this subject were occasionally renewed almost to the close of her life; and they could not have been entirely without reason. But we have equal reason to admire the power of divine grace; for this natural propensity was so completely subdued that in the latter years of her life not a trace of it appeared: on the contrary, meekness and patience were, in a remarkable degree, her habitual characteristics.

The practical character of Mrs. Cooke's christianity was perhaps its most striking distinction. None could say more correctly than herself, "One thing I do." The will of God appeared the only rule of her life; and this gave such consistency and uniformity to her conduct as compelled the respect and the confidence of all classes. Those who were most ready to suspect religious professors of hypocrisy, felt no suspicion about her. Whether they went to church or to meeting—whether they be-

longed to the higher or the lower classes—all regarded her as one in whom was no guile.

In support of the cause of Christ her contributions were always large in proportion to her means and opportunities. Frugal in her personal expenses, she was liberal in all things which concerned the glory of God. In her widowhood, when her income was much diminished, she never stinted her donations to the cause of Christ; and often the words of Paul concerning the churches of Macedonia were applicable to her; "To their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; praying us, with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift." Few indeed are the subscription lists current at Ingham, which have not been shortened by her death.

In the management of the house she was industrious, careful, and frugal; her attention and influence, pervaded the whole domestic economy; and she consulted conscience in its minutest concerns. In the training of her children, her chief desire was to imbue them with the spirit of piety; and she spared no pains in the use of means likely to be useful to that great end. She watched over their morals with a jealous eye, and sought to keep them from injurious society, with a strictness not always acceptable to the young and thoughtless: any violation of truthfulness or integrity, was sure to excite her displeasure. She was not much accustomed to punish her children; but by sorrowfully talking with them on the evils they had been guilty of, and praying with them for forgiveness and grace, she made deep and lasting impressions on their minds. The description of a virtuous

woman given in the book of Proverbs admirably suited her:—

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust her. * * * * She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband, also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

Her activity in visiting the ignorant and the sick, has been largely illustrated in extracts from her diary. This was so well known, and the value of her ministrations so well understood, that she was often sent for to direct the thoughts, and meet the inquiries of the anxious and alarmed. Her heart was so full of the all-important subject, that on such occasions she went into it at once. Nor did she find that difficulty in coming into contact with the conscience, of which some complain:—a difficulty, which probably arises, either from the want of earnestness, or from the fear of giving offence. She was generally very careful not to offend; but when she saw death approaching, with his sting unremoved, she was too anxious to attend much to these inferior things; and it was to this close grappling with the soul, prompted by earnestness, and made easy by practice, aided by the confidence which every one felt in her sincerity, that her frequent usefulness in the visitation of the sick, may chiefly be ascribed. She frequently, also, supplied the

sick poor with food from her own table. But she objected to give temporal relief when she administered spiritual instruction, being afraid that the expectation of a gift, might interfere with the working of her exhortations, and that some might pretend to desire them, only in hope of obtaining temporal assistance. There was much wisdom in this: a false pretence is not only dishonourable, it is a sin against God; and next to commiting sin himself, a Christian will dread being the occasion of sin in others. Dr. Chalmers acted on the same principle with our venerable relative, when he visited the poor of Glasgow.

"I was very much surprised," writes the Doctor, "at the cordiality of my welcome, until I found that it was in consequence of my influence in the distribution of the parish charities. I therefore resolved to dissever myself from the administration of these charities altogether. I soon made the people understand that I dealt in only one article, that of Christian instruction, and that if they chose to receive me on this footing, I should be glad to visit them."*

It is interesting to trace a correspondence between the policy as well as the principles of two persons so wide apart in situation and endowments, but both aided with the wisdom which is from above.

Mrs. Cooke attended so much more to the sick than to others, because she saw that they might probably be approaching eternity, and that therefore, there was no time to be lost. She could get access to them also, more easily than to those who were in health, and she

* Memoir of Dr. Chalmers, 2nd edition, vol. i, p. 433.

thought that their minds would, probably, be more impressible. But she was always ready to introduce religion to the inconsiderate, and was often the instrument of good to such. To the young she was particularly attentive, and some of them dreaded to be with her, lest she should talk to them about their souls. To those whom she could not personally reach, she would write plainly and faithfully on divine things, and in this mode of address she had attained great excellence.

She was never ashamed of her master, or of his cause. She felt that she had truth on her side, and that the worldly and unbelieving were dangerously in error; and she cared little about being thought obtrusive or fanatical, if she might serve Christ, and rescue souls from perdition. She was concerned to be clear of the blood of all men: and it was a very small thing in her account, to be judged of man's judgment, if she might approve herself to her master in heaven; the great account was to her mind a solemn reality, vividly apprehended, and undoubtingly believed, and "knowing the terrors of the Lord," she persuaded men.

Her standard of piety was very high. She constantly aimed to have her will completely in harmony with the will of God, and to find all her happiness in him. She had the habitual seriousness of one who felt that she was a pilgrim on the earth, and that her sole occupation was to keep on steadily in the path to heaven. She carried this so far as to dislike secular music, both vocal and instrumental; and amusements commonly regarded as innocent, even by religious people, were distasteful to her. Distrustful of herself, she kept her heart with constant diligence, and was often brought to self-con-

demnation before God, for variations of temperament and feeling, which might fairly be ascribed to outward causes, and which could not, in common charity, be regarded as shewing any real alienation from God.

Her humility was remarkable. Few thought so little of her as she did, or were more ready to listen with attention and deference to the voice of instruction. From every thing like praise, however naturally called forth, and honestly uttered, she shrank with genuine dislike.

Another virtue which distinguished her was charity,—that charity which "believeth all things, hopeth all things." This feeling was sometimes carried so far as to provoke a smile; if a brute did wrong, she would find an excuse for it, if she could. But its choicest fruits were reserved for the human race, and, especially for the family of God. She saw many things among religious people which she could not approve, but she was always unwilling to condemn; and her sorrows at minor inconsistencies, and the anguish of her spirit at the more serious falls of professors, shewed how sincere was her regard for their reputation and advantage.

On the whole, our departed relative was remarkable for the *completeness* of her Christianity. The transformation of the new birth had spread through her whole being: she had become a partaker of the divine nature, in every part of her character, and has left behind her few who have attained in an equal degree to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The following extracts of a letter, received soon after the death of Mrs. Cooke, from Mr. Samuel Wiseman, Agent to the Norfolk and Norwich Auxiliary Bible

Society, will serve still further, to illustrate the character of the venerable deceased.

"It was in the year 1838, that I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of the late Mrs. Cooke. The work which brought us together, was to me comparatively new, and the ground then sought to be occupied was also new. Bible Society meetings had not been extended much beyond cities and market towns. Therefore the work proposed had very much of the nature of an experiment. But it was one of some significance. I well remember the gathering of friends at Stalham, for the purpose of hearing and considering the scheme for filling Norfolk with village Bible Associations. At that meeting Mrs. Cooke was present, and her whole soul entered into its objects with joy and delight. Her quiet but thoughtful spirit seemed to catch a full view of the benefits likely to result from such an enterprize, and at once to comprehend the position it was her duty and privilege to take in the work that day to be begun. There were many and various difficulties. The scheme was new; the time was thought, by some, to be doubtful. But Mrs. Cooke saw, that to call Christian people together for the purpose of uniting in one band of sympathy and activity, all who are desirous of glorifying God, and doing good to their fellow-men, by a general diffusion of his holy word, at home and abroad—was reasonable, scriptural, and well calculated to advance the cause of him, who unites all true believers in himself, and with himself to the God and Father of us all. At that meeting Mrs. Cooke took the office of Secretary, which post she filled most efficiently to the

close of her long and useful life. From that day, her house became my home, where I ever found the tenderest care for my comfort and well-being, with the peculiar influence which 'mothers in Israel' throw over those who are brought under their care.

"To say that the late Mrs. Cooke filled the post of secretary with much advantage to the society would be to record a very simple fact. She succeeded in an eminent degree in embuing those around her with love to this grand design for filling the earth with the knowledge of God. There was a peculiar and heavenly catholicity of thought, and feeling, and action, and prayer, in my departed friend, upon which it is delightful to dwell, as the term of our union passes in review. The same quiet, unobtrusive, warm hearted sympathy which marked her out to my mind as an eminent saint of God at our first intercourse, I ever found through that entire period. No lukewarmness, no faltering ever appeared. Her sympathy, her love, her activity, were ever the same. Day by day her lips seemed to have been touched with a live coal from the altar; day by day she seemed to have been breathed upon by him whose breath imparts the Holy Ghost. Thus qualified her soul felt, in some good degree, for those around her that which St. Paul calls 'travailing in birth again till Christ be formed in them.'

"The annual gatherings on the day of the Bible Meeting form no insignificant item in the history of the past seventeen years of the Stalham Bible Association. These gatherings were seasons of deep concern to her pious mind. They engaged her earnest prayers on behalf of all who might be present, but especially of the young people. Her remarks to me at those seasons carried with

them proof of the fulness of her soul on their behalf. In this, as in all other matters, as she began so she went on, from the first meeting to the last manifesting the constraining love of Christ, working in her heart the desire that, each succeeding year, the meeting might be made a spiritual blessing to all present.

"Had I not known it by other means, I should never have known by what passed between us on religious subjects, that Mrs. Cooke was a Baptist. No one could be in her company without knowing that she was a Christian; this beamed forth in her whole bearing and deportment: but in all my intercourse with her I do not remember a single instance in her remarks upon Christian truth, or in her references to religious experience, in which I could have discovered what was her denominational position. In a very eminent degree her theme, as well as her trust, was Christ crucified for sinners; his blood the one atonement for sinners; salvation by faith in that blood; the fulness, and sufficiency, and authority of Holy Scripture on all matters concerning the creation, the fall, the restoration and the final salvation of man; with the necessity of the light, and power, and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to open the understanding, and guide the soul to a right sense of sin, and pardon, and heaven by the word; these were the prominent themes of her conversation upon the subject of religion.

"In full health, in growing feebleness of body, and in the near approach of death, she was always the same; a quiet believer, sometimes a timid one, but always a believer in him who never brake the bruised reed. To the last she held fast by the good cause which brought us together; and I found it no small comfort to receive

from her, as her dying testimony, that 'this work is of God.'

"I cannot close this short notice of my dear friend's career, since it was my happiness to become acquainted with her, without expressing my earnest hope that all who have the honour of calling her 'mother,' may be drawn by the love of Christ to lay themselves at the foot of his cross as she did, and there be made, like her, new creatures in Christ; and thence go forth to fill up the places allotted to them; and to the same degree as their sainted mother, cast a savour of grace around them; and like her be able, at the close of life, to meet death with the calm but satisfying assurance that their peace has been made with God; and when all in this world is over may each be safely landed in heaven with her."

APPENDIX.

LETTERS.

TO A YOUNG FRIEND RELIGIOUSLY DISPOSED.

Written about 1811.

My dear ——

As you appeared to like the subject of religion, and were pleased to ask for a copy of what I read to the young folks, I am induced to think you may have no objection to my writing you a letter on that subject; though I must own, I feel less able than I ought, to speak of the goodness of that God who has been my kind preserver from my infancy to the present moment. He is indeed a being who deserves our noblest praise. As the God of nature and providence, his tender mercies are over all his works. How astonishing, how admirable are they, in the creation of this habitable globe! O for the tongue of David to speak of them! In Psalm viii, he takes a delighted survey of the wonders of creation, and says, "When I consider the heavens, the work of

thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, Lord, what is man?"

In the first part of the Book of Genesis we have a beautiful description of the formation of these wondrous works of Almighty power.

The Word of God, that best of books, all deserves our constant and diligent study. It tells us, not only of the works of providence, but also of the nobler works of grace. What a mercy that this great and august Being, who created the universe, should condescend to give a declaration of his mind and will, and hand it down to us! There we are told that God made man, and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living soul," an immortal being; one that must exist as long as God exists; and he endureth for ever. By the Word of God we are informed that "God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions." He was made after God's own image; but, alas, he violated his Maker's commands, and thus brought sin and misery upon all his unhappy posterity. For "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God!" "There is none righteous, no, not one." "The heart is deceitful above all things." This is proved a truth by woeful experience. If we observe our conduct we find that we are sinners. "We have erred and strayed like lost sheep; we have done those things that we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things that we ought to have done;" and wretched, for ever wretched, must have been our condition, had not "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is

the noblest work of God, the work of salvation. Beautiful as the works of creative providence are, they are not equal to the wonders of divine grace. This then, my dear ——, is the subject that demands our loudest praise, our serious meditation, and our earnest pursuit. Surely we ought to praise the Lord, for pitying poor rebel man, in his lost and fallen condition; when, according to his strict justice, he might have banished the race of Adam for ever. But, amazing goodness and pity, his own arm brought our salvation; and of every believer in his name, he says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom."

It demands our serious enquiry, whether we have an interest in his glorious salvation. None, it is true, are excluded, but those who exclude themselves; but if we neglect this great salvation, how shall we stand in the great, the solemn day of judgment, when the glorious Saviour shall come in solemn pomp, not to be despised, rejected, spit on, and scourged, as when he stood in the stead of poor sinners; but "when he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired of all them that believe."

The theme of salvation by Jesus Christ, demands our earnest attention: for though we can never save our souls by any thing we can do, having already broken the holy law of God, yet if we are not found seeking to be saved through the merits of the blessed Saviour, we

have no right to expect that we shall be. We are bound therefore, to seek the Lord by prayer and supplication, that by his blessed Spirit he would cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, and give us grace to believe in, and follow after the Lord Jesus Christ; for "he that believeth on the Son of God hath life, but he that believeth not, hath not life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

My dear ——, can you say 'I desire to love that dear Redeemer, who has so loved poor sinners, as to come from heaven to earth to save them?' Then I congratulate you, for you would not have loved him, had he not first loved you. May you be earnest in reading the Scriptures, whenever you have time to read, "for they are able to make you wise unto salvation, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost:" and let me advise you to seek the Lord for yourself, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, for the mercies you are receiving at his hand: your wants are matter for words; but if you think you could not pray without a form, by all means use one, for the Lord does not look at the manner, but at the heart.

I trust you understand, that in urging you continually to attend to these things, I do not mean that you are to neglect the duties of life; for we are commanded to be diligent in business, but at the same time, fervent in spirit. So that, while we must not neglect the common affairs of life; we are to endeavour to have thoughts above them, and not forget that we are formed for eternity. Morning and night it should be our prayer, that the Lord would keep us from indifference about the things which make for our eternal happiness, and preserve us from a love to the vanities of time, and give us grace to choose the good part that shall never be taken away: but when we are called from this world, as

we shall sooner or later be, may it be our happiness to have our faith anchored on the Lord Jesus, so that when we are absent from the body, we may be present with the Lord. This is the prayer of,

Dear ——,

Your truly affectionate,

S. Cooke.

TO THE SAME.

My Dear ——,

I wish to let you know with what pleasure I received your welcome letter, which, as it informs me of your health and comfort, demands my thankfulness; but your serious reflections, and experimental expressions, gratify me still more. The health of the body is a great blessing, but the prosperity of the soul is of much greater importance. If we are destitute of a concern for the soul's happiness, we are injuring it, and exposing it to eternal misery. O my dear ——, I cannot but praise the Lord, that he has inclined your young mind to serious concern about that immortal part, which is of more value than a thousand worlds. It rejoices my heart, that I hope God is shewing you your sinful state, so that you see and feel the necessity of being saved by the blessed Redeemer; for till we feel our lost condition, the Saviour's suitableness and preciousness are not known. May he, who I trust has thus far enlightened the eyes of your mind, continue to shew you more and more of yourself in a gospel light, and of the worth and suitableness of the blessed Jesus; for it is all of free grace that any are inclined to remember their Creator in the days of their youth; and a mercy, indeed, it is to be

early inclined to serious concern about eternal things: for as Watts says—

"'Twill save us from a thousand snares
To mind religion young."

And another poet says—

"Religion should our thoughts engage
Amidst our youthful bloom;
'Twill fit us for declining age,
And for the awful tomb."

And O my dear ——, how many are called to an early tomb! You are no stranger to the fact, that young Mr. —— has been called away by death; a few months ago he bade fair for long life: but his race is run; he has entered the world of spirits, and has appeared before his Maker, and his state is now unalterably fixed either in happiness or woe. O how desirable to give evidence that through grace we are choosing the good part that shall not be taken away from us, so that if hastily called from this world it may be well with us, and our surviving friends may have a comfortable hope that we are gone from a world of sorrow to a world of joy and endless glory. O my dear ——, may you and I pray earnestly that this, and every such striking and alarming providence, may stir up our souls to a greater concern about the only things that can afford us peace in a dying hour, and that we may have our minds more weaned from the pleasures and amusements of this life, which are so ensnaring and entangling to young minds. Suppose we were now standing by the death-bed of this youth, and beholding his countenance pallid and languid, and his eyes rolling with anguish: if we were to ask him what satisfaction the mirth and gaiety he once enjoyed now

afford him, his answer would be "miserable comforters are they all." On the other hand, should we bring forward the Bible and the religion of Jesus, the soul just quivering on the brink of eternity, if not hindered by unbelief, would hail it as the only cordial to the sinking soul.

If, then, religion is the only solace in a dying hour, surely it is the highest privilege to possess its consolations. May my dear ——, from a fresh view of death in one well known to her, be made, by the Spirit of God, more than ever anxious to seek first, and above all things, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all other needful blessings shall be added. Fly every delusive snare; recollect that the pleasures, amusements, and vanities of this world, afford no satisfaction, but leave a sting behind. May the friends of the departed youth, and we also, consider that, as Dr. Young says—

"For us they sicken, and for us they die."

I should not have dwelt so long on this dreary subject, but I thought it calculated to shew you, more than ever, the value of religion in youthful days, and I trust you will receive it as well-meant.

I must now think of concluding, with a few hints by way of advice, at your request. First, then, ever consider that all strength to perform duties, and shun evils, must come from God. Therefore, I trust you will never omit seeking his grace. I am happy to find you know these things without my telling you; but I find it good to have the word of exhortation and encouragement, and therefore I give it you. Secondly, as Young says—

"Read your Bible to be gay,"

[illegible] will make them melancholy. [illegible] opportunity for this. If necessary, write [illegible] some more in the week; it must [illegible] the glory of God in our daily calling in the diligence & honesty concerns is much greater [illegible] than [illegible] any incumbent on the Christian. By attending to this the prejudices of some are removed, and others are constrained to do likewise.

I trust you as well know your duty to your dear parents, that nothing need be said on that subject.

I leave you for reflection, Philippians iii. 8: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." I subscribe myself dear ——,

Your truly affectionate,

S. COOKE.

TO A YOUNG FRIEND UNDER DISAPPOINTMENT.

Written about 1819.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

I have thought much of you, and felt *much for* you since I heard of your trial; you have not *been forgotten* in my poor petitions, that you may be *able to bear* up your spirits with Christian fortitude, and *to consider* that none of these things come by chance; *there is* an overruling providence which permits and *allows these* things to occur; and I trust that in the end you will find they are working together for the good of

your soul. It is true, trials do not sit easily upon us without divine support; but we have the promise that the Lord's grace shall be sufficient for us, and his strength shall be made perfect in our weakness.

I hope you now more than ever value the throne of grace; for as the poet says:—

> "Trials bring me to his feet,
> Lay me low, and keep me there."

I trust also that you will be led more than ever to the important duty of self-examination; for when we are surrounded by trials, it appears peculiarly needful to know our state; to know what our hope is, and where our treasure is; for "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable;" and "where our treasure is, there will our heart be also." We shall find in our outward difficulties, that it is an unspeakable mercy to have a hope beyond the grave, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest;" and if, on self-examination, we have good ground to hope that the blessed Jesus is our treasure, with him also we shall desire to have our hearts; and if the loss of a right hand, or a right eye be the means of Jesus being more discovered to us as our Saviour, glorious, suitable, and altogether lovely, we shall in the end have no cause to repine. The soul of a Christian may be in a flourishing state when enjoying mercies; but I doubt not that trying seasons are the most favourable to its thriving and growth. I have often had pleasure in believing that you love the ways of the Lord; and I think you will now have more cause than ever to praise him, if he has brought you to the knowledge of the truth, and made

you savingly acquainted with himself; for though it is at all times a mercy to have the consolations of religion, yet never does its soothing influence appear more needful than in the midst of trials and disappointments.

I trust you at all times find it a great mercy to have such a friend and counsellor as your dear mother; I doubt not you value her very highly, as one who has your eternal happiness constantly in view; I trust her prayers and advice will be valued by you more than ever. What a mercy it is that the gracious Lord has spared her; I think you can but praise him, that you have a parent to whom you can unbosom yourself without reserve, and from whom you may expect advice and consolation.

That the good Lord may support, comfort, help, and direct you, is the prayer of

Yours very affectionately,

S. Cooke.

TO A GENTLEMAN IN ILL HEALTH.

Written in 1822.

Honoured Sir,

Not thinking it proper to intrude upon you with much conversation in your weak state of health, I take the liberty of addressing a few lines for you to peruse, as you may find strength so to do. This step may be thought presumptuous in me, but having had such convincing proofs of the condescension of your manners, I make bold to proceed, assuring you that my motives are truly christian; and my prayer is that God

would enable me to write such things as may, with his blessing, lead your mind to the diligent search after divine happiness.

It having pleased the Almighty that you should have been exercised with peculiar trials, to shew you the emptiness of created enjoyments, I consider it a loud call in his providence to draw your mind to himself; and if he is pleased to sanctify it to the good of your immortal soul, you will have to confess it to be amongst the all things which work together for good to them who love God; and I sincerely hope that this affliction under which you have laboured, and by which you are yet confined, will prove a time of serious reflection and recollection. You justly observed, it is right we should be afflicted, that we may know our dependence on God for our blessings. May you enjoy a pleasing consideration that your times are in the hands of that Being who is too wise to err. In sending these few lines, chiefly written on spiritual subjects, I would not be thought to lead you into a dull and melancholy strain; on the contrary I consider that true pleasures are those which will not pass away, and true wisdom is the fear of the Lord. Happy, truly happy are those, and those only, who have experienced a change of heart, feel their need of the pardon of their sins, and are by the Divine Spirit led to seek salvation from sin and eternal misery through the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of those that believe. But that all in a Christian country are not in this happy state we have awful proofs; and Scripture speaks of persons being "quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins," which plainly proves that divine sentence to be true, "ye must be born again; yes, "if any man be in Christ Jesus

he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things become new." Now the grand enquiry for us, and permit me to say, for you, Sir, is, have I experienced this divine change? I am a sinner by nature and by practice; my conscience tells me I have broken the law of God; and unless I have a divine surety to pay my debt to offended justice, I am lost for ever. But even this consideration, though by some called gloomy, is not so in reality, because when God sets these truths home on the conscience they only tend to open a bright scene; for when the poor sinner is convinced of his danger, then the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus gladden the soul; then the precious truths of the gospel come with divine power: that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life," is a declaration calculated to dispel every gloom, and to afford that peace which passes all understanding; so that when I press a strict attention to religious duties, such as fervent prayer, reading the Scriptures, &c., I am not endeavouring to depress the mind of the afflicted gentleman whom I now address, but my motive is that, with the divine blessing on the means of grace, he might possess joy unspeakable and full of glory. Permit me then, honoured sir, to say that I sincerely wish and desire that you may be frequent in enquiry into your true state as a sinner. Be assured the first grand step towards eternal pleasure is to know ourselves. How many are fancying they are not great sinners because they are moral, and respected by men. Our Lord viewed things very differently. He knew the heart of man was desperately wicked, and therefore he speaks of it, in the xvth of St. Matthew, in a manner

one should think ought to deter any man from saying, I've a good heart, I never did any one harm, if I am not saved who can be? May the Lord undeceive all such characters, lest they feel their deception when too late. That the Eternal God may, in his infinite mercy, so display his enlightening grace, that all the blessings and real enjoyments of true religion may be possessed by you in sickness or health, in life or death, is the fervent prayer of your unworthy servant,

SOPHIA COOKE.

P.S. I have enclosed a book for your perusal, Sir, as I think it may divert your mind, and lead to spiritual contemplations, as well as show how God blesses various means for the restoration of bodily health.

TO THE CHURCH.

Written October the 26th, 1829.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

Having been several weeks separated from your social meetings and public worship, I have felt a wish, on my returning strength, to write you a few lines as an assurance that though absent in body by the hand of affliction being laid on me, I have been present in spirit, and I hope I may say with the apostle, "joying and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." At one part of my affliction I thought I should see your faces no more in the flesh, and that I could not take a better farewell of you as a church than in the language of Peter, first chapter, second Epistle,

from the second verse to the sixteenth. Through mercy my mind was calm and easy, and when I was nearest death I felt the most desire to depart. I found much comfort from the promises of God being brought to my mind, and several hymns, particularly the following in Rippon's selection, 266, 524, and 554. I hope that had the Lord called me away at this time, I should have welcomed to glory all of you who are looking to and living on Christ. 'Tis true there was something very solemn in the article of death, to pass that untried path, to think of ashes returning to ashes and dust to dust, to consider that I who was so lately in health and joining with you in the services of God's house, should see you no more, but that you would surround my grave as the last token of Christian esteem, and perhaps even sorrowing that you should see my face no more; but when I turned my thoughts from these gloomy ideas and considered the glory that awaited me, and remembered that my Saviour had gone before me and taken away the sting of death, and had died that I might have a place in heaven, and was gone to prepare it and would come again to receive me; I could rejoice in hope and even long to depart. But since it has pleased God to spare me, and I hope he is raising me up again, (though my strength yet returns but slowly,) I feel willing to abide in the flesh and wait the days of my appointed time till my change come; my greatest fear is lest I should not be so fully devoted to my Lord as I ought, lest the cares of life should hinder my spiritual progress, lest I should not be more than ever alive to serve him who has afresh called upon me to know if I love him more than everything else. I assure you, my dear friends, I saw in myself

very much to lament as to unfruitfulness in the ways of God, so that I could feelingly say,

> "What have I done for him that died
> To save my wretched soul?"

The bed of affliction and the prospect of death is a good season to try ourselves; but however unprofitable I had been, yet for your encouragement to attend closely and constantly on all the means of grace, I assure you I never once regretted having attended on public worship too often; I only had to lament I had not profited by it more. Pray for me, my friends, that if I am raised up to attend as formerly, I may be more concerned to aim at drawing others also; and here, my dear friends, I would encourage you who do draw your neighbours with you to public worship, and exhort others who may not have considered its importance to use every means for the time to come. We learn by the accounts from America and Jamaica that those revivals in religion with which they have been favoured, have occurred through the means of Christians inviting their ignorant neighbours to attend with them the house of God, and then talking with them on what they have heard, and so keeping up their attention to it. O that we may copy after them, that we that have families may begin at home and keep our families at public worship, and then try them as to what they have heard; but let us go much further, let us invite our neighbours, and thus copy after those mentioned in Scripture, who said, "come with us and we will do you good." Thus shall we be fellow-workers with our minister; whilst he studies, preaches, and prays, we shall be the instruments of obtaining him hearers and aiding

the success of its ministry: united to this we must not forget to use "the weapon of All-prayer;" begging earnestly in our public and private petitions that the kingdom of Christ may come, and that the Holy Spirit may quicken and convert those who are yet dead in trespasses and sins, and that the work of grace may go on in the hearts where it is begun: let those who fear the Lord speak often one to another, and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together: thus shall we have cause to expect that that God who hearkens and hears, will open windows in heaven and pour out a blessing upon us, that as a church and congregation we may revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and the scent thereof be as Lebanon.

"Thus shall the church below,
Resemble that above,
Where joy like morning dew descends,
And all the air is love."

With Christian remembrance I remain, my dear friends, your souls' well wisher,

S. COOKE.

LETTER TO A MOTHER ON THE DEATH OF HER SON.

Written in 1831.

MY DEAR MADAM,

Will you pardon my boldness in addressing a few lines to you by way of sympathy under your very painful loss. A stroke so sudden and affecting seems to awaken the feelings of all around; how keenly then must it be felt by a tender father and indulgent mother!

Your son was universally esteemed as the friend of the

poor, the condescending master, and the pleasant companion; and many a tear must have been dropped at his removal.

Feeling as I do how much you must need the upholding power of God, to sustain your mind under this very heavy loss—and having a pamphlet by me, written by a clergyman of the Established Church, which I think calculated to alleviate the distress of your mind—I take the liberty of sending it for your perusal, hoping and praying that it may prove a means of raising your thoughts from the painful providence which now must cast a gloom on all your earthly blessings, to him who can sustain beneath the heaviest load; and who "does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men," though he shews his sovereignty by taking what he gave, and by so doing loudly calls on the living to prepare to meet him in death and judgment. I sincerely pray that you may be enabled to submit to his divine will, and more than ever see the importance of being in a state of reconciliation with him through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, when he dwelt on earth, wept at the grave of Lazarus.

It will give me pleasure to know, that this freedom of mine, resulting from sincere respect, is received with candour; and that it is in any degree useful to soothe the minds of a sorrowing father and mother, and, above all, to benefit the souls of those who, according to the common course of nature, will, after a few more years at longest, have to bid a final farewell to all the cares, and pleasures, and sorrows of this life. And permit me to add, that it will give me inexpressible pleasure to find that this awakening providence is blest in causing

religion to be the one thing uppermost in the decline of life. I doubt not that the Almighty designs such affecting strokes as loud calls to his creatures to give him their whole hearts. Often in trial has the Bible been a more constant companion; often has prayer become more the delight of distressed minds; and often, very often, has the house of God been more profitably attended, and the sincere followers of Christ more their chosen companions. Thus have many had cause to say,

"Father, I bless thy gentle hand;
How kind was thy chastizing rod,
That forced my conscience to a stand,
And brought my wandering soul to God."

Thus may the loss of one who was the hope of life, and the promised comfort of declining age, be overruled for the profit of the soul, which can never die. That such may be the result of this very solemn dispensation, to yourself, your family, and the neighbourhood, is the sincere desire and prayer of,

Dear Madam,

Yours very respectfully,

SOPHIA COOKE.

TO A SICK OLD MAN.

Written in 1832.

MY RESPECTED, AGED, AND AFFLICTED FRIEND,

Having several times had conversations of a friendly nature with you, I felt a good deal concerned to hear you were suddenly taken very ill. And

as I always think the time of affliction a season suitable to show respect, and above all a concern for the souls of those around me, I have that desire towards you; and as in some cases it is more useful to write to than to call on the afflicted when so ill as you are, I have adopted that plan now, hoping that there may be some seasons when your dear wife may be able to read this and the tract sent to you for your benefit and consolation. And I pray that God may overrule this to you for the welfare of that part of you which must live for ever, when your body returns to the dust from whence it came.

I doubt not but at your advanced age, you consider this affliction may be sent to call you away from this world; and if so, I hope you pray to the Almighty that you may be prepared to appear before him. It is a solemn thing to die, because after death is the judgment. May it be your mercy to have the teachings of God's Holy Spirit to convince you of your sin, and grant you true repentance and pardon, through the merits of the only Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ; for though you have been a good neighbour, a kind father, and a good husband, yet in the sight of a pure and holy God, you are a great sinner; for as you have often said in your prayers in the public worship of God, so it really is, you have offended against his holy laws, having left undone what you ought to have done, as well as done those things you ought not to have done; now this, as a violation of God's command, exposes you to eternal misery, and nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ, who came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it, can save you. The grand thing then is to inquire, "dost thou believe in the Son of God" with all the heart, for "with the heart

man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." O my friend, I sincerely pray that you may now be looking to and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation. If we had not been sinners he would never have come into the world to fulfil the law of God which we have broken, and to shed his precious blood for the pardon of our sins. May God grant that you may now feel your sins a burden that will sink you into eternal woe without pardon, and may that, through grace divine, lead you to see that Christ is willing and able to save you, so that you may be prepared for life or death, time or eternity.

I remain, your sincere friend,

SOPHIA COOKE.

With this letter was sent the Tract, "Am I a Christian."

SOCIAL ADDRESSES.

TO THE FAMILY OF MY DEAR HUSBAND.

Delivered after a long illness, in 1811.

My Christian Friends,

For such I trust I have the pleasure of addressing at this time, will you permit me to tell you that it gives me much pleasure to see you once more beneath this roof; and whilst I wish that every means may be used to render it an agreeable meeting, I trust I shall not be thought too officious in introducing a subject, calculated to benefit the soul as well as the body. It is true you have heard of the blessed Jesus for many years, and I trust are now become savingly acquainted with him; but we have not heard enough of him; if we love him we are never tired of hearing of him; and though I am not worthy to mention his dear and sacred name, I would endeavour to lisp his praise, and to exhort my fellow travellers to Zion, to "press with vigour on," knowing that

> "A heavenly race demands their care,
> And an immortal crown."

Little did I expect, a few weeks back, to be ever permitted to enjoy this friendly circle again. Pale death stared me in the face, and the view of mortal things, that I then had suggested another kind of meeting: a meeting where I should have been absent, and the partner of my days would have been surrounded by his loved relatives, to follow my remains to the silent grave. If ever I valued the religion of the Bible, I valued it then, and if ever Christ was esteemed as the chiefest amongst ten thousand, it was at that time. To have been entirely without hope in his death and merits would have left me the most miserable creature in existence; but through mercy, when I thought I must bid a long adieu to those I held dear on earth, I had a hope that when heart and flesh failed me, God would be the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. I particularly mention this season, because when death appeared so near, I felt concerned about my dear friends, and thought how little I had admonished the careless and unthinking, and how little I had encouraged those who I hoped were brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. My opportunity for glorifying my dear Lord, and benefiting my friends, seemed to be at an end, and I thought if ever the Lord was pleased to raise me up again, I would, through his assistance, endeavour to attend more to this too much neglected duty: and I trust, my friends, this will be some apology for introducing a subject so beneficial and interesting to us all; and though I don't feel myself so capable of conversing as I wish, yet I dare not be silent; therefore I use writing to convey my sentiments. And now, my Christian friends, may I be allowed to say, "What think ye of Christ?" after

a profession of him for years, after the many precious opportunities that you have had for hearing of him in his preached gospel, after having found him at a throne of grace, and after having beheld him in his written word, I trust you can say "he is precious, he is a suitable Saviour, he is just that Saviour that I want, I would wish to be saved by him, and him alone;" then permit me to exhort you to shew your kindness to your friend and Saviour by a firm and steady attachment to his cause; shew to the world that you are not ashamed to own your Lord, nor to defend his cause; attend to known duty, let his word be your constant directory; considering how short time is, how soon your opportunities will be over to serve God, I trust you will love him and desire and strive to honour him. Press forward, never rest satisfied with present attainments, seek him earnestly by prayer, secret and public, remember the word, "pour out thy fury on the families that call not on my name." Don't forget family prayer is an important duty; though we are weak, the Lord is able to assist and strengthen. It is the fear of man that brings a snare, but the Lord says such as are ashamed of him he will be ashamed of. Public worship you well know is a duty, which I trust you find the benefit of attending to; consider my friends how it gladdens the heart of your minister to see you there; what encouragement to him to find that he does not study to preach to the walls, but to a people whom he may expect to attend to hear. May he always lie near your hearts, then he will share much in your prayers, and reap much temporal comfort from your liberal support of the gospel of our dear Lord in this place. Consider, my friends, in supporting a minister of the

gospel, you are supporting Christ himself; it is his cause; he has souls to bring to the knowledge of himself, he sends his heralds, his ambassadors, as the instruments in this work: what an honour, that in supporting a gospel minister, you are not only promoting your own spiritual benefit, but that of precious souls that are held fast as Satan's captives. You would feel much to view a poor negro slave, and wish to use means to liberate him. I trust your hearts are still more enlarged towards those precious immortals that surround you, who are held fast by the prince of darkness; surely under these considerations you will strive who shall do the most towards supporting that gospel that is sent as a message of peace and mercy towards fallen man; consider, my friends, I am not pleading my own cause, but the cause of the blessed Jesus—that Jesus who though he "was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that you through his poverty might be made rich." My good friends, don't think that I wish to lord it over you by recommending the cause of Christ to your attention; I know that you have shown your attachment to it, and have supported it, which, I trust, affords you peace on reflection, but I know it is said "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and therefore it is your happiness I seek, if I say with the apostle "I beseech you that you abound more and more." You have had a parent who has set an honourable example in this respect; and does it appear that his family is a loser by it? O no, quite the reverse; the Lord blesses them in their basket and their store, and leaves them each means to go and do likewise. Before I conclude, I must just mention some excellent institutions that claim the attention of the Christian in

prosperity. One is the Baptist Missionary Society, another, the Female Penitentiary, a third, the Bible Society, and a fourth, the Religious Tract Society. Subscriptions to these God-glorifying institutions are received in London, at different places. The Bible Society I ought to have put first, as it is the Word of God, that all other Christian institutions spring from: should any feel disposed to become subscribers to this, Mr. Pickers could convey the subscription money, and Bibles would be sent to distribute to those of our poor who need them. And now my Christian friends, I trust you will excuse every defect, and cover a mantle of love over my imperfections; and then if it please the Lord to call me hence, before we have another family meeting, I shall have the peace of mind to reflect that I have done my poor endeavour to plead the cause of my gracious Lord.

TO SOME CHRISTIAN FRIENDS WHO VISITED ME IN 1811.

Delivered a few days after the preceding.

My Christian Friends,

As the Lord has been pleased to raise me up again from the bed of affliction, and the gates of the grave, and permitted me once more in a measure of health to behold your faces, and enjoy your company in this habitation; I trust you will not judge it inexpedient to offer you a few thoughts on the value of personal religion, and the necessity of self-examination, as Christian professors. I trust you know the value of the former, and have found the benefit of the latter; but as

I often have lamented that when Christians meet, our conversation savours too much of the world, I thought that the adoption of this method might be a means of keeping the world out, and that instead of hindering your spiritual progress, I might rather hope to lend you, however weak, a helping hand in the road to Zion. I can say, from experience, that the necessity of real religion appears very great in the near approach of death, when the soul is about to be launched into an eternal world; then to be possessed of faith in an Almighty Saviour, appears the only thing that can make death easy; destitute of this invaluable blessing, death is indeed the king of terrors; how dreary the prospect of leaving all our near and dear connections, to bid adieu to the blessings of providence, to quit this world of admirable structure, and have no hope beyond the grave; dreadful beyond description must such a situation be; surely then there is a *needs be* for real religion, not only in the prospect of death, but in the time of affliction; how needful the balmy blessings of vital godliness, when our sympathizing friends stand around us, and can afford us no relief from our pains; how supporting the consolations of religion, which enable us to believe that all things work together for good, that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and that our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Not only in the prospect of death and under affliction, does the religion of the blessed Jesus appear valuable, but in all the trials we are subject to in this life. How supporting under bereaving dispensations, that though the Lord takes our friends, yet he ever liveth to support and

comfort the soul that through grace is looking unto him for life and salvation; and frequently gives us to experience that, when he takes a friend or relative, he does it that we may enjoy more of himself; and so in all the tribulations that we meet with, whether outward or inward, he lays no more upon us than he by the power of religion enables us to bear. O my friends, cannot you bear witness how many times he has been better to you than all your fears, and in the language of the poet, say,

> "When trouble like a gloomy cloud,
> Has gather'd thick and thundered loud,
> He near my soul has always stood,
> His loving kindness O how good."

O then be exhorted to thank God and take courage, for

> "He that has loved us bears us through,
> And makes us more than conquerors too."

Thus, my dear Christian friends, have I attempted to speak of the value of the grace of God in the heart; and if this is so valuable a blessing, the necessity of self-examination appears very great, for the Word of God says, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, try your ownselves, know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates." O then as we value our souls and the honour of God, may we never neglect this important duty; it is not only a necessary duty, but an interesting one; can the Christian be happy in a state of uncertainty and suspense? is it not his joy and consolation to read his title clear to mansions in the skies? then he will always find it very needful to try himself by the Word of God. Many are the criterions laid down there

by which we may judge of our state; in one place it is said, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another," and "we know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" how needful then to examine our hearts, whether we feel love to the people of God; for this has oft proved an evidence of a state of grace, when sensible comforts have failed; but in a state of darkness and desertion, self-examination appears highly needful; can we then feel a secret hope and desire after him whom our souls love? it is of more value than thousands of gold and silver; or if we cannot find that, yet if we have a hatred to sin and the ways of the world, it will afford us a ground for hoping that though sorrow endures for a night, joy will come in the morning. And indeed at all seasons self-examination will appear a duty that is much to our advantage, and also for the honour of our God; especially after hearing the preached gospel, it will be much to our benefit to turn our thoughts inward, to ask our souls what progress we are making in the divine life, whether we are going backward or forward? We have great cause for thankfulness, that the Lord has sent us a minister calculated to stir us up to diligence in the ways of God; and this we ought to esteem a great mercy, for it is seldom but that the Christian of some years standing wants to be spurred up to diligence and activity in his service; may we then be fervent in prayer to the Lord for our minister, that he may never slacken his pace but be pressing on in the ways of the Lord, and be the honoured instrument in the hands of God of building us up in the faith, and of stirring us up to activity and zeal for the Lord of hosts. I trust I need not say that

not only does our minister claim our unceasing prayers, but also his partner and offspring; much of his comfort and usefulness depend, under God, on them; they may be great helps or hindrances; it is our mercy that he is favoured with a partner who is of one mind with him in the Lord, and one or more of his children. O my friends, let us always remember them in our petitions, that those who know him may live to glorify him, and that those who know him not may be brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. As a church I trust you well know your duty of praying with and for each other, of bearing each other's burdens, of covering a mantle of love over each other's failings, and of keeping secret the private concerns of the church; much injury has been done by a too free communication of church matters. I trust you recollect that the church is compared to a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed; by this I conceive that the affairs in a church should be kept close, and only mentioned to such as we hope are of the household of faith; for the world has ever been an enemy to the church and people of God, it is, therefore, for the honour of God and the prosperity of Zion, to be very watchful in an affair so important to the peace and harmony of the church of God. I trust, in love, you will receive these well meant though imperfect hints. As many young persons have lately been brought forward to join, I thought these latter hints might not be thought unnecessary nor unseemly. Feeling my own imperfections, and the usefulness of a word of advice, I trust my friends will not think that I wish to set myself as a judge in other men's matters, but as a well wisher to Zion and immortal

souls, I have offered these few broken hints, begging that a mantle of love may be covered over all their defects, and may the Lord in much mercy cause his word to run, and be glorified in these parts, that many may declare themselves to be on the Lord's side, that Jesus may be glorified and souls eternally saved.

TO A PARTY OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

Delivered January 15th, 1812.

My dear young Friends,

I have the pleasure to congratulate you on the sparing goodness of the Almighty in permitting us to see the beginning of another year; and, as this is the case, surely fresh gratitude and devotedness of soul to him is but our bounden duty; and as one that has experienced much of the mercy and goodness of the Lord, I should consider myself most ungrateful should I use no endeavour to bring honour to his name by exciting in you a devout attention to the welfare of your immortal souls; and though it gives me pleasure to see you cheerful and innocently gay, yet I hope you will not consider me your enemy in not setting the card table before you this evening, but rather introducing reading and singing the praises of God: it is my desire and concern to render our meeting such as may afford peace to the conscience on a dying pillow; and however amusing the vain pursuits of the world may be counted, I am persuaded that the recollection of them will be only as thorns to torment the mind when death appears to

separate the body from the soul. A piece I have read now occurs to my mind which may not be improper to rehearse; it consists of lines composed on a conversation the late Rev. Mr. Hervey, author of "Meditations Among the Tombs," had with a young lady that was very partial to worldly amusement, especially to plays; they are as follows:—

"How great my pleasures at the play,
A lady once was heard to say;
Amusement surely all divine;
Be such amusement always mine!
First there's the joy I always know
Before the hour arrives to go;
And when I'm there—but who can say,
What are my raptures at the play?
Besides, the recollected joy
Next day affords me sweet employ.
That may be true, a friend replied,
But is there not one joy beside?
You have not mentioned,—tell me why,—
The joys of plays when call'd to die?
Perhaps a thunderbolt from heaven,
Might then have less confusion given.
The gay young lady felt the smart,
Conviction seized her trembling heart.—
False pleasures now no more amuse,
Superior bliss she now pursues.
O happy change, she cries, and tells you why;
Religious joys will last when call'd to die."

And this, no doubt, will be the reflection that a Christian may expect on a deathbed; then the soul will adore and praise the God of all grace, for drawing the mind from the fancied or false pleasures of this world, and setting the affections on heavenly things.

It is some time, my dear young friends, since I thus addressed you; and though to human appearances I may

not seem so near death as at that time, yet, as I know not the hour of dissolution, I ought to be ever considering that my departure is at hand; and the same advice that I would give you on a deathbed, the same would I give in the vigour of health—"Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." It is my happiness to reflect that I have good ground to hope I am addressing those who know what it is to seek the Lord, and have found him precious. O, my friends, what a distinguishing favour has the Lord conferred on you if he has given you this grace, to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. I am fully persuaded that

> "'Twill save you from a thousand snares
> To mind religion young;"

and it will also

> "fit you for declining age
> And for the awful tomb."

It is a very wrong idea to suppose that real religion makes people gloomy, morose, and unpleasant; the want of it may do this; but I believe that religion, or the grace of God in the heart, makes a child a better and more dutiful child; for those children to whom God has given a saving knowledge of himself are more than ever desirous to render their parents comfortable: how many prayers do they put up for them, if they fear they have not real love to God and his ways: how anxious are they that their conduct may be circumspect, so that their parents may have no occasion to speak evil of the good ways of God through any misconduct of theirs; how desirous they are to provoke unto love and good works, so that those that have no love to the good ways of the Lord

cannot help acknowledging that they see a difference in them for the better; and thus are they enabled to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, and put to silence the ignorance of those that know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son Jesus; and so it is in the other relations of life; thus is religion honoured, and thus the believer goes on his way rejoicing, being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

But ere I conclude, I cannot help observing what cause I have of rejoicing on account of many of my young friends, of whom it has been made manifest that they love the blessed Jesus; many have made a public profession of his blessed name, and many others I trust will soon follow their steps.

To one and all of you, my dear young friends, I would say—

"Ye hearts with youthful vigour warm,
The glorious prize pursue;
Nor fear the want of earthly good,
While heaven is kept in view."

Hoping that from a friend to your eternal interests, you will not take amiss this well meant, though very imperfect, address, I commend you to the care of a covenant-keeping God. Amen.

ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG CHRISTIAN FRIEND,

Delivered June 18th, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

The repeated warnings of providence, by the stroke of death in one and another of our fel-

low-creatures, is a sufficient apology for my taking up your time and attention, whilst I offer a few remarks on the value and blessedness of true religion. The recent death of a young friend and companion in the house of God, has been an additional inducement to me to surmount the singularity of occupying you in this way, whilst so many things pleasing to flesh and sense seem inviting the attention. But impressed as I am at this moment, with the solemnity of a death-bed and a dying hour, and the necessity of being prepared for the summons, I am induced, for myself and for you, to ask the important question, are we possessors of real, true, evangelical, or heart religion? have we experienced a change of heart, a change of pursuits, a change of conduct altogether? on what do we rest for happiness beyond the grave? are we fancying ourselves possessed of real religion because we are found every Sabbath at the house of God, because we assemble with his people, and read his word,—which *are* all inestimable duties and privileges in their places,—or do we rather look upon those duties as the gracious means which the Lord has appointed for the instruction and benefit of our souls,—as the means first of bringing us to the knowledge of himself, and then of establishing and strengthening us in his most holy ways? well then, my dear friends, upon close enquiry can we give God the praise, that, "whereas we were once blind, now we see," have we reason to hope that our sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake, and do we build our entire hope of happiness hereafter on what Christ has done and suffered? I am happy to say I have a comfortable hope that this is your situation and mine; and if so, shall we not desire to devote our few remaining days or years, to

his service, and in the pursuit of real godliness or true religion? yes, methinks you reply:—

"Let carnal minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me:
Once I admired its trifles too,
But grace has set me free.

Its pleasures now no longer please,
No more delight afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have known the Lord."

Happy pleasures, happy portion, where Jesus is the object of pursuit! You know the blessedness, I need not say what peace religion yields; then let us rejoice together, and sing:—

"O happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God;
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.

'Tis done! the great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and he is mine;
He led me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the name divine."

O my dear young friends, I cannot express the feelings of my mind, when I reflect upon the amazing grace of God, that called me, unworthy as I am, to know him in my early days! What thousands of snares it has preserved me from, what thousands of comforts and consolations has it imparted to me, amidst afflictions, losses of friends, and the common vicissitudes of life, and what pleasure and support does it afford me in looking to the time when it shall be said of me, as it is now of dear Miss Thomson, "she is dead, she is gone from all her near and dear connections, she has left the church and people of God

below. she is now to us no more:" and is not this a blessed religion that makes us so inwardly happy in time, affords us lively hope in the hour of dissolution, and crowns us with such unutterable joys in glory, that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive" of them? and is not this religion worth suffering reproach and shame for? shall we shrink at a little self-denial, and fear the cross? O no, may we earnestly entreat the continued influence of the divine Spirit, that we may be willing to forsake all and follow the Lord, coming out from the world, and having no unlawful connection with its pursuits and maxims. We know the blessed Jesus does not promise his people much in this world but tribulations, but that need not discourage us, for the people of the world have them and no promise with them; but if we are on the Lord's side, he says to us, "in me ye shall have peace;" and is not this enough to overbalance all the trials we may meet with? O yes, and never did I converse with, or hear one Christian say that ever he repented serving the Lord. But lest I weary your patience, I conclude with the words of the poet:—

"Ye hearts with youthful vigour warm,
The glorious prize pursue,
Nor fear the want of earthly good,
While heaven is kept in view."

FUNERAL ADDRESSES.

ADDRESS TO A FUNERAL PARTY.

My Friends,

Being requested to meet you on this solemn occasion, I asked myself, what use would my attendance be, seeing there would be friends who would aim at improving the opportunity to the glory of God and the good of souls. But fearing I should slight a call in providence, and thus deaden my soul to spiritual enjoyments, and neglect my duty to my fellow immortals, I resolved to come, and, if there was a short space open from other devotional exercises, to read you a short address. If the seasons when death is evidently in our company are not to lead to serious reflections I know not what are; and I would pray the Father of Spirits to make me faithful to those who compose this mournful company.

My dear friends, you are conscious that you must soon follow our departed friend to the house appointed for all the living, as the poet says,

> "That gloomy prison waits for you,
> Whene'er the summons come."

> "Once you must die, and once for all
> The solemn purport weigh;
> For know that heaven or hell attend
> On that important day."

You would blame that physician who saw his patient was in danger of death and did not apprise him of it; how much more unfeeling is that person who sees the danger of the soul being lost and yet remains silent. In coming here, at the funeral of our dear departed friend, I have considered myself in a very solemn situation. I have thought thus—I am to meet several friends, many of whose cases I am unacquainted with; but I know they have immortal souls, and I know their souls are in danger of being lost. And why so? Because you have all broken the righteous and holy law of God. To this you may say, but God is a merciful God, he forgives sins. Yes, he is indeed a God of mercy. But, my friends, think well on this important subject; he is also a God of justice; if not, why do we hear of such amazing sufferings on his beloved Son? If God could have shewn mercy to any one without his justice being satisfied it certainly would have been shewn to his beloved Son. But hear the voice of justice saying, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Again, hear the dear, the agonizing Jesus, crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." Does not this prove that the justice of God could not be satisfied in any other way than by the sufferings and death of the dear Redeemer? O then, my dear friends, think me not your enemy because I tell you the truth. Unless you are convinced of the requirements of the law of God, and feel yourselves guilty, wretched sinners—unless, the Spirit of God, whose office it is to convince of sin, work in your hearts true and evangelical repentance,—unless as poor, self-

condemned and law-condemned sinners, you go with your burden of guilt to that dear Saviour, who has invited the weary and heavy laden to go to him, you are not in a safe state for heaven. I must meet you at the judgment-seat of Christ. And if my life is spared I may, by your request, attend one or other of your deathbeds; and then you will not blame my faithfulness. Be assured it will give me the greatest pleasure and satisfaction to hear you are led by a sense of your sinfulness, to Jesus Christ, through whom alone mercy can reach your guilty souls. My friends, in saying thus much, don't think that I wish to consider myself better than you; alas, no, I am one among the "*all*" that "have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I am one that deserves eternal misery as well as you; I am one that expects no mercy, nor happiness beyond the grave, but what will be extended to me through what Christ has done and suffered to make my peace with God. But perhaps some of you may think thus: What you have stated is true: I hear these things preached, and I perfectly assent to them. I am a sinner, and know there is no way to heaven but through Christ. But, my friends, beware of stumbling; remember who it was that said, when the Saviour was on earth, I know who thou art, the Son of God. It was a devil owned Christ to be the Saviour. O let us consider how important it is for us to know what kind of faith ours is. You may be ready to say I discourage you; but I would not do so. If you really feel your need of Jesus to make you perfect in the sight of a holy God; if you have gone to him as a poor penitent, grieved at heart for your sin and rebellion against him; if you can say from your heart you love the

Saviour, and desire nothing so much as to have an humble assurance that your sins are forgiven for his sake, I would give you the greatest encouragement. I would say, you have no real cause to fear; you shall never perish. You have the promises of God for your support, the throne of grace for your asylum, the house of God for your refreshment and consolation, the Bible for your companion and your guide; you have the Holy Spirit for your comforter, Jesus for your Saviour, God for your Father, and heaven for your home. But the hints I have offered are merely that you may try yourselves, to see what manner of spirit ye are of, considering that an outward profession will avail you nothing at death and judgment. Remember, my friends,—and pray God, by his Spirit, to set it home on your hearts,—that the Lord Jesus has said, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not done many wonderful things in thy name, to whom he will say, I never knew you: depart from me ye workers of iniquity." That God may sanctify this solemn providence to you, the bereaved partner, and friends, and cause this sudden death to prove the life of the souls of those who have not yet known the Lord, is my prayer.

ADDRESS TO A FUNERAL PARTY.

WHEN we reflect on the scene which we have just witnessed, the depositing in the grave of a blooming youth, who very lately bade fair to live many years on

earth, it cannot be deemed inconsistent or unimportant that a little time should this evening be dedicated to the things which belong to the soul, that immortal part which will have an existence when the poor clay tenement will be mouldering in the dust. What an awakening providence ought this to be to us all! Is it not another loud voice from God which says, "Set your affections on things above," or "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." O may we hear his voice in this the day of visitation, may it quicken to greater diligence, those who hope they have been awakened from the sleep of nature's ignorance, and also be a means in the hands of God's spirit to quicken those who may yet be dead in trespasses and sins. What can be the design of Jehovah in taking away the young, the promising, and the pious, if it be not to strike conviction in the breasts of the living? and happy those who resist not the convictions of their minds in those solemn moments, but encourage them by earnest prayer, and constant attention to the various means of divine grace appointed by the "King of kings and Lord of lords." Does not an event, so affecting to our feelings as this, seem to say, "Now is the accepted time and the day of salvation;" "Remember now thy Creator;" "Prepare to meet thy God," &c. If there be one more solemn providence on earth than another, it must be the committing the body of a departed friend to the silent grave; and this solemn event we have just witnessed, and ought we not to look into the grave and contemplate the lessons which it teaches? Does it not shew us we are sinners. Why is it that man that is born of a woman has but a short time to live and is full of misery? because man is "born in sin

and shapen in iniquity;" and this my friends is my, is your case, and you know that he who has taken the soul of our departed friend to himself, will shortly bring you to the grave, the house appointed for all the living. What a solemn event has happened, how vast its consequences! yet strange to tell, the coffin, the grave, &c., are too soon forgotten, and we seem to think that we have many years to pass over our heads before it will come to our turn to be borne by our fellow-creatures to the silent grave. May the Lord awaken us from this day, to consider that these are things of the greatest moment; can it want to be asked in this circle of friends, Is it of little consequence that your immortal souls must soon pass into an eternal world? is it a small matter that every soul of each now present must be an everlasting companion of the heavenly throng, or,—O dreadful!—the companion of infernal spirits in the dark regions of eternal torment. How then does it become you, my dear young friends in particular, who have not yet shewn yourselves to be on the Lord's side, to consider this solemn, this very affecting dispensation as the day of your visitation; you have souls within you to be saved or lost: you may not have another month to call your own; you are only waiting for the few remaining sands of life to fall, and then all the amazing realities of another world will burst upon you; you hang as it were by a slender thread, which will soon snap asunder and drop your body into the grave, and fix your soul in happiness eternal, or horror never ending. Under these ideas will you allow one of your most hearty well-wishers to put the following serious inquiries to you:—"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and when

I ask this, I ask in fact, Is he your only hope? do you look to him as the Israelites looked to the brazen serpent—do you call on him as Peter, when sinking in the water, cried, "Lord save or I perish"—or in the language of the psalmist, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee?" If you are so happy as to have fled to Christ, and to depend on him for salvation, you will shew by your life and conduct that your ways are directed to keep the statutes of the Lord; his ways will be yours, and his people your people; which may God grant for your benefit and his glory. You have fresh encouragement to make religion the one thing needful. The dear young friend whom some of you have borne to the grave, and whom we have followed thither, gave pleasing testimony to the pleasure he found in the ways of true godliness: much did he admire the grace and goodness of God in bringing him to experience a change of heart in the bloom of youth; and much, very much, did he rejoice in the salvation of sinners, and used every means in his power to seek the welfare of those whom he had influence over; never did I see a more pleasing evidence of real religion in one so young; and I feel happy at the thought how highly the Lord has honoured him in giving him such pleasures here, such bright prospects before he left the world, and in taking him from the snares and temptations which God's people have to combat with in this vale of tears, and crowning him so early with a crown of glory. Permit me just to say to his dear parent, brothers, and sisters, Dry up the starting tear, rejoice for the deceased, your loss is his infinite

gain; only believe in Jesus, and still press on, and heaven is yours for ever. Let such as have good ground to hope they are walking in his ways, ever take courage from what they have seen and heard from him; and may you, if any there be that are in doubt, be very earnest to make out that you have a title to that heaven where his happy spirit now rejoices before the throne of God.

SUNDAY SCHOOL ADDRESSES.

TO THE CHILDREN OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

(Without date.)

DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

In addressing a few words to you I wish to keep in mind that I have various ages and capacities before me; and though each of you has a soul that will endure for ever and ever, yet you are not all alike able to comprehend or understand the important things which belong to your present and eternal peace. You are all created by that great God who has made heaven and earth, the sea, and the dry land; and that great God has a right to your earliest services.

I would begin with little children—you little ones attend to what I now say: you have a great favour from God conferred on you that you are taught at this Sunday School. Some years back little children like you had none to care how they spent the Sabbath or Lord's day; many little ones like yourselves were wandering about the fields, and in winter it was no strange thing to hear of some poor careless little ones who left their parents, forsook the house of God, and were drowned by the breaking of ice;

and,—O dreadful!—their souls sinking deeper into the waves of eternal misery than their bodies in the water. My dear little ones, think of your mercies; think of God's goodness in causing teachers to be willing to come and teach you, and to receive you to be taught; and let that thought make you willing to be constant in your attendance, and attentive and obliging to your teachers. And recollect, little children, you come here to say your catechisms and to be taught to read; and what for? that by it you may know about God and the Lord Jesus Christ, that blessed Saviour of whom your hymn tells you,

"His soul was gentle as a lamb,
And as his stature grew,
He grew in favour both with man
And God his Father too;

Now Lord of all he reigns above,
And from his heavenly throne,
He sees what children dwell in love,
And marks them for his own."

And now, who amongst you little ones wish to have Jesus mark you for his own? all that do must pray night and morning, and beg to be one of Jesus Christ's lambs; for he is so gracious that little children *may* be his lambs. O then dear little ones, don't think you are not noticed by the blessed Jesus; he has said, "Suffer the little children to come to me and forbid them not." But remember, if you are Christ's lambs you must be like lambs; and what are they? you have seen them; they are meek and gentle, they don't fight and quarrel, they love one another: and O, if you wish to be Christ's, you must not tell stories, you must "speak the truth always, and be honest and kind to all." But I must leave you

little ones, whom I have spoken to first that I might be the more likely to keep your attention.

I would now say a few words to those children who are neither the eldest nor the youngest in the school. Dear children, I often think of you, and as my situation is to attend to a class at a distance from you, I have no communication with you, which I sometimes regret, as I should like to know and converse with you all; but as my duty when here confines me from it, I the more readily embrace an opportunity now given me, of putting a few questions to you, which, though you will not be expected to answer me just now, I hope you will think of answering in your own minds, and if I or any of the teachers request an answer I hope you will give it; and my first question is, Have you any desire to serve the Lord? Do you wish to flee from sin and all bad ways? Do you believe that you will be punished in the world to come if you live and die without loving and serving Christ? Have you any wish to go to heaven when you die? and if so, how or in what way do you expect to get there? Do you know and believe that it must be through what Christ Jesus has done and suffered to save sinners? Now dear children, I have a few words to say more to you, and then I turn to the elder ones; you know I must take only a few things up at one time, or I could say more. Remember when you come to school, that your teachers love you, and not only pray for and with you, but that they long to know you real Christians in early life, that you may be members of Christ's church here and in the heavenly world.

And now I come round to you, my dear young friends in the higher classes, to tell you how much I love your

souls, how much I wish you may love the Saviour who has said, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." Do let me entreat you to pray God to give you his Holy Spirit, to take of the things of Jesus and reveal them unto you. You cannot tell how much pious teachers long for the salvation of your souls; don't forget how long you have been favoured with their prayers and watchful care, don't let their faithful appeals to you be in vain, don't let this wicked world have your hearts whilst God is saying, Give them to me. O my beloved young friends, my soul yearns over you with Christian affection; how will it rejoice my heart if, ere I leave this world, I may hear that one and another of you are born of the Spirit of God, and are turning your backs on this vain and wicked world, to love and serve the dear Saviour. O remember these solemn truths, "If any one have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." "If any one love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be accursed." Also, "He that believeth not the Son of God hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Dear young friends, can you rest in such a state as this? are you not afraid, when you lie down on your beds, lest you should never awake again but in the flames of hell, for neglecting this great salvation? Let me entreat you, by all that Christ has done and suffered for sinners, by all the invitations of his gospel, by his promise to receive all who come to the Father by him, and by all the love and concern of your teachers, now in the accepted time, now in the day of salvation, to give up yourselves to the service of God. Let his ways be your constant delight, give over the follies of vain and unsuitable dress, seek to be clothed with humility, and help to fill our weekly

meetings by your attendance, and by your efforts to draw your parents here too. I have only to add, my heart's desire and prayer to God for you all is that you may be saved.

March 17th, 1816.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

The children of the Sunday School, as I have now an opportunity of addressing you without infringing upon your time for instruction and improvement in reading, I embrace it with pleasure, feeling myself greatly interested in your happiness for time and eternity, and feeling greatly the importance of your being reminded of these things, which through the blessing of God make for your eternal peace. I would remind you of the instructions you receive at this school from your teachers, who kindly and voluntarily attend here for your benefit; and by that means you, many of you, are taught to read God's own word, and others that are not so forward are instructed from your catechisms, whereby you are informed of God the great Creator and Preserver of man; but as at such seasons we have not so good an opportunity of entering much on enlarged instruction on the subject, it may be right that I should now call on you, each of you now present, for it is you I address; and may the Lord arrest your attention, and incline your hearts to regard what is said. I say I call on you to recollect that that great God you hear and read of is the Lord and governor of this world, and he has made holy and righteous laws for you and all his creatures to obey; by his laws are meant the Ten Commandments, which many of you have learnt by

heart, since you attended this school, if never before; and if I ask you to repeat them, and then try your conduct by them, you will stand guilty before God; thus you have made God your enemy, and living and dying so, you must be shut up in the region of misery, which is the dreadful dungeon for the ungodly, as your hymn tells you:—

"There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains."

God your Creator has not only made laws, but he has appointed a day in which he will call all of you, as well as all mankind to judgment. You hear of people who take what is not their own, which is called thieving; such break the laws of their country, they are committed for trial, and, when the judge comes they are tried, and according to their crime so is the punishment. How solemn! but how much more solemn when God's judgment shall be set, when Jesus the Great Judge of the quick and the dead shall come to judge the nations of the earth, and you my dear young friends will have to appear there, whether you die young or old. O consider, should affliction seize you, and death arrest you, you must be brought to the bar of God, and how will you bear the trial? you have broken God's laws; your conscience tells you that you have trifled with eternal concerns, you have thought too lightly of what you have heard at the house of God, and you have perhaps slighted the counsel and instructions given you by your teachers; how then can you expect to meet death without terror, and judgment without horror? Don't

turn away from this solemn subject; it is most assuredly true, for God who has so mercifully given us his own word, tells us "It is appointed unto all once to die, and after that the judgment." Be assured my dear children it is love, undissembled love to your immortal souls, connected with the account I have to give to God, that leads me to tell you these things; for recollect that though all do not die on one day, all will have to meet on that great and solemn day, when the Lord shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him; that day when the archangel's trump shall sound, and all that have been in their graves for thousands of years shall awake, and the sea shall give up the dead that are therein, and they, with you and me, shall have to come to judgment. I therefore tell you of these things, that should any of you live and die in the neglect of your souls, you may not have to say at that great day that you were never told of them. I go on to tell you from your catechism, that you have each of you an immortal soul; as you have the words there:—

"'Tis that by which my body lives,
Which thinks, and acts, and joys, and grieves,
And must in heaven or hell remain,
When flesh is turned to dust again."

Thus you find that your souls must be either happy or miserable through all eternity. If you ask what is eternity, I answer, it is a world without end, as it is said "for ever and ever." And is this so? Yes, the word of God tells us so in Matthew xxv, "These," that is, those who die ungodly, "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous," those that trust in Christ for salvation and live to his glory, "into life

eternal." And now my dear children, let me ask you, have you never had any serious thoughts about your souls? Some young children, younger than some of you, have manifested a great concern for their souls, as some of you may have read in the death of Elizabeth Raddon, John Vale, &c.; and we have accounts in God's own blessed book, of young persons fearing the Lord in their youth; we find 1 Samuel iii, "The Lord called Samuel when he was but a child;" 2 Chronicles xxxiv, 3, it is said that, "King Josiah when he was yet young, about sixteen years old, began to seek the God of his fathers;" and in the Second Epistle to Timothy, which is a letter that the great apostle Paul wrote to a young minister of that name, he recalls with pleasure, that Timothy had known the Scriptures from his youth, chap. iii, 15; as you have it in another of your hymns:—

"Samuel the child was weaned and brought
To wait upon the Lord,
Young Timothy betimes was taught
To know his holy word."

And my dear young friends, how will it gladden the hearts of your teachers, if you should be brought savingly to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. By saying *savingly* I mean that you may be brought not only to know God as your Creator but as your Saviour, and experience a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit of God. For my young friends, from what I have already told you of your awful state as breakers of God's holy and righteous law, you and all the race of Adam, (who your catechism tells you was the first man) justly deserve to be cast into the prison of hell to be reserved in chains and

darkness unto the judgment of the great day. But blessed be God he has appointed a way in which he can be a just God, and yet a Saviour. You have heard of the Lord Jesus Christ; your catechism tells you:—

> "He's Jesus and Jehovah too,
> And every knee to him shall bow."

Well, this blessed Jesus came to fulfil that law which we have broken, and to die the just for the unjust, and is now in heaven to plead for poor sinners, and says, That "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" and therefore, should any of you feel distressed on account of your having sinned against God, and so long neglected your souls, if you now feel a desire to love and serve him, he invites you to him in the language of Matthew xi, 28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and in Proverbs viii, 17: "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." Recollect, my young friends, you must experience a change of heart, which our Lord, in John iii, calls a new birth, or you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; you are born in sin, you live in sin, and unless grace prevent you will die in your sins, and where God is you cannot dwell. Are any of you concerned to experience this change? then I would remind you again from your catechism, that:—

> "This most important gift of heaven,
> To those who ask and seek is given,
> Then be it your immediate care,
> With importunity of prayer,
> To seek it in a Saviour's name
> Who will not put your hopes to shame."

But on the other hand, if you feel no concern about your souls, and no desire to love and serve the Lord, but rather a dislike to all religious instruction, your situation in this life is miserable, and your condition in the world to come will be awful beyond description. My heart's desire and prayer to God for you all is, that you may be early taught of God; that the preached gospel which you hear may be your delight, and that your lessons for your improvement in reading may be a source of comfort and instruction to your immortal souls. Go on diligently attending at the Sunday school, value your teachers, regard their advice, obey their commands, and consider their disinterested regard for your welfare in coming at all seasons of the year for your instruction; and may your education make you more useful (if your lives are spared) in the sphere of life in which you may move, and prove in the hand of God a means of your eternal happiness, which may God grant for Jesus sake.

November 28th, 1830.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

At our teachers' meeting on Monday evening it was agreed, that one of the teachers should address you once in a quarter of a year, beginning with the senior teacher. It is, therefore, my place to begin; and having been a teacher for sixteen years and more, I can but feel great interest in the welfare of the school; had I felt none, I should not have continued it so long; and whilst I feel a desire you should be taught to read, I should have only partially performed my duty in this school, if I had not endeavoured to impress on your

minds the necessity of attending to those things which belong to your eternal happiness; and it has given me pleasure to hear within this last year, that what I said to one in advising her to learn hymns had made a lasting impression on her mind; and one hymn was a great comfort to her in her dying illness, I think it was the 13th in the Selection:—

"Awake my soul in joyful lays,"

This thought encourages me in addressing a few words to you now present; and I pray God to fasten them on your minds by his Holy Spirit. "Hear," then, "ye children the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding;" remember each for yourselves, that you are possessed of a soul that must live for ever; your bodies will soon return to the dust, the grave is often opened for the young, how many of your youthful companions has it hid from your sight, and your young teachers too, since the school was opened? and you may soon be numbered with them. Now let me ask you to think, every one of you, what do you expect will become of your soul after death? perhaps, if I asked you to speak aloud, you would say, We hope to go to heaven when we die. This I know is very commonly said; but there is more in it perhaps than you ever considered; God Almighty is a pure and holy being, and he will have none other to live with him in heaven but those who are such; and you are far from that. How often do you forget God that made you, and how often you neglect to pray to him, if you do it at all. Now God should be loved above every thing, but I fear you love the trifling things of this world better than him; God's

word should be strictly obeyed, seeing he has been so good as to give us it; but have you done this? yea, have you not rather put it aside from you, and even considered it a task to read it, and yet you say you hope to go to heaven when you die. Another thing is this, God in heaven will require constant worship; now here, ere the Sabbath is past, or even one sermon, you are listless and inattentive, and are ready, according to your appearance, to wish the Sabbath over; if this is the case you are not in the way to heaven. O then, from this moment pray, earnestly pray, that God, who is so holy, may give you a new heart, make you love Christ his dear Son who came to die for sinners, and seek for forgiveness through his merits; and from this day I pray that you may become new creatures in Christ, and devote yourselves to his service, that you may have good cause to think you shall go to heaven when you die. I advise you to be very diligent in learning hymns, and keeping in mind those you have learned, and your catechisms, that if you live to go to service they may dwell in your thoughts and influence your conduct, or if you have affliction they may be a support and comfort to you, as they were to her before mentioned, and then God will be glorified in you and by you, Amen.

AT THE ANNUAL TREAT ON INGHAM FAIR DAY.

May 27th, 1839.

Dear children of the Sunday School at Ingham chapel, as my health has been bad of late and I am obliged to keep from much bustle and cold air, I think it

likely I shall not meet with you this year as I have often done: I therefore write these few lines to have read to you, and some small tracts to be given to you, as I have them by me, and I thought you would like them, and besides, I think, though they are small they abound with good advice and entertaining reading, and I hope you will take them home and read or have them read to you, as in some you will have good advice, as it regards your duty to love and serve the Lord Christ, in others, as to your duty to your fellow-creatures, and there are a few that will teach you it is your duty to try and get children to come with you to the Sunday school: the title of those tracts is "How to enlarge a Sunday School;" and I hope you will all try and do what I have seen recommended to Sunday scholars, that is, that each scholar should endeavour to bring one new scholar; by this, I don't mean you are to try and get them from other schools, but try for them among those who stand about idle and go to no place of instruction. I am very glad to find the school is increasing, and hope that the continued efforts to improve it will be evident in the beneficial effects on those who now attend for instruction, and shall hereafter be taught; especially if the plan can be brought to bear, that the superintendent should take aside individual scholars to question them on religious subjects, to find what improvements they are making from the enlarged efforts of the teachers. You are aware, my dear children, I have by illness had very little knowledge of the improvement you have derived from the last new arrangements of the teaching system, but I fondly hope it will endear the

teachers to the scholars, and the scholars to the teachers, that by means of united affection, instruction may have the best effect. You are aware, my dear children, that I am growing old, and I can tell you, if there is one thing I can look back upon with pleasure more than another, it is the recollection that twenty-five years of my life I have been a teacher in the Ingham Sunday School: yes, my young friends, twenty-five years this spring a few friends were deeply impressed with the duty and necessity of a Sunday school being formed here. My lamented Mr. Cooke and myself were of the number of those who began as teachers, and for many years, many of us were thus honourably employed, though of the oldest of the number I only am living to address you: I wish I could inform you how many scholars we began with, and how many have been taught here since its commencement, but at present I cannot; many I hope will in the great day declare they have not been taught here in vain; some I know of, but few in comparison to the number taught here. It gives me pleasure in the prospect of leaving this school by death, and perhaps before from growing infirmities, that the prospects are so very pleasing, that improvements are continually making, and that pious teachers are increasing, and I hope that union will increase strength, and peace and prosperity attend the institution. Now children, for the present farewell; forget not that there is a time for all things; and whilst your kind teachers and other friends to the school are giving you this treat, to keep you from the evil of the day of the fair, you must endeavour to call off your attention at times from earthly amusements to attend to

spiritual instruction, as it will pain your teachers on reflection, if the whole time which is so precious be given to the mere gratification of the body, whilst so many ere another year may be mouldering in the dust. With best wishes for your happiness for time and eternity, I am, your affectionate teacher,

S. COOKE.

THE END.

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